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Mrs A Beckett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Beckett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Burlington Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 24 January 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in January 2018, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- strengthen and sharpen senior leaders' and subject leaders' monitoring and governors' evaluation of the school's work and its effect on pupils' learning
- improve teachers' skills in diagnosing the barriers to pupils' learning and developing challenging work to enable pupils, particularly the most able, to move on rapidly in their learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, the chair and representatives of the governing body, and the local authority to

discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I visited lessons, met with pupils and looked at a sample of their reading, writing and mathematics workbooks. The school's improvement plan was evaluated and a range of documents, including leaders' monitoring records, were reviewed.

Context

Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher returned to the school, following illness, and a further deputy headteacher joined the school in April 2018. Three teachers left the school in August 2018 and three teachers joined the school during the autumn term 2018. The governing body currently has five vacancies.

Main findings

The introduction of a senior leadership team, and stability in the turnover of staff, has helped the headteacher and governors to implement school improvement plans with purpose and vigour. Changes, in the form of new approaches to support the teaching of mathematics, reading, and, very recently, writing, have led to a more coherent curriculum. The structured programme that pupils study, when taught well, is developing the progression within the curriculum that had previously been missing. This important development is supporting pupils' learning. Training of staff to implement these changes has been introduced methodically since the last inspection and has gathered momentum over the last two terms. Checks made by leaders show that pupils in all classes are starting to benefit from the investments made in staff training. Monitoring records show more consistency to what is taught in each year group and teachers are willing, and increasingly skilled and confident, to apply their recent training, especially in the teaching of mathematics.

Pupils are engaged by a more purposeful approach to teaching, interesting resources and new routines in classes. The range of questions teachers ask in lessons is beginning to encourage pupils to think and respond. However, leaders recognise that further training is required for teachers to share practice and develop their skills further. They have plans to do this. The pace and productivity in lessons have improved and pupils say they are reading more widely and know a greater range of methods to solve mathematical problems. Teachers' expectations of pupils have increased; however, leaders and governors recognise that there is still more to do to consistently extend and deepen learning for the most able pupils. The current focus in lessons is the completion of tasks. Sometimes this is at the expense of teachers' checking of pupils' understanding and diagnosing the barriers to their learning, so that thorough learning takes place. Some pupils, including less able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are taught by teaching assistants for mathematics and the nature of what is studied is different and at a slower pace. Consequently, for pupils who need to make the most gains in learning this approach is not currently having the desired effect in closing the gaps in their learning.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving. School records show fewer behavioural incidents and less disruption in classes during the last academic year. Staff training has led to greater clarity and consistency in applying school policies. Pupils know what is expected of them and try to concentrate and do their best. Low-level disruption occurs occasionally by a very small number of pupils in a few classes. Pupils' attendance has begun to improve in response to a school-wide focus. Leaders and governors acknowledge that there is more work to do to reduce absence rates among disadvantaged pupils and they are keen to investigate further the barriers to their attendance.

Governors are receiving more information about the work of the school; however, in discussions during the inspection, they also recognised that more thorough evaluation is required on their part. Senior leaders and subject leaders have yet to review the 15-minute sessions that take place daily for those pupils who have struggled with understanding in lessons. They have yet to see if this additional support is having the intended effect. Well-intentioned developments, such as recommending 100 books for all pupils to read, are thoughtful suggestions to extend pupils' breadth of knowledge and understanding of different types of texts. However, access to these materials for disadvantaged pupils and the effect of this initiative currently does not feature in the school's plans or in the reports leaders make.

External support

A writing programme suggested by the local authority is helping to provide more breadth and depth to the school's curriculum. However, the effect of this is at an early stage and the school remains dependent on additional teaching and support for pupils entering Year 6 with gaps in their learning. Many subject leaders are new to their roles and they are providing useful support to teachers in implementing the new curriculum. However, some leaders have yet to develop their monitoring and evaluation of the school's work and its effect on pupils' learning sufficiently to gain a critical insight into pupils' knowledge in their subjects. Support and training to help them to do so has not been commissioned.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Riding of Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector