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Mrs C Mugglestone
Headteacher
Merrydale Junior School
Claydon Road
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Dear Mrs Mugglestone

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Merrydale Junior School.

Following my visit to your school on 29 September 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 visit is the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement, identified at the last section 5 inspection, in order to become a good school.

HMI recommend that urgent action is taken to:

- raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly pupils in Years 3 and 5 and the most able, to help ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good
- ensure that information about pupils' performance is analysed in greater detail, to enable leaders to improve their understanding of the performance of different groups of pupils

- implement an action plan to improve outcomes for those pupils supported through the pupil premium. This should include **clear** success criteria to enable governors to check the impact of each action
- ensure consistent application of the school's marking policy to support pupils' accelerated progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, two members of the governing body, including the Chair, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of an outstanding school, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I scrutinised a range of documents and visited every classroom. I also looked at pupils' work and spoke to a group of pupils about their work. We discussed the external review of pupil premium expenditure and the changes to staffing since the last inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection two teachers have left the school. You have appointed a new leader for English, two new assistant headteachers to oversee the quality of teaching and learning and new leaders for Years 3 and 5. A newly qualified teacher (NQT) was appointed in September 2015.

Main findings

Information about pupils' achievement is not used well enough by leaders. The school has a wealth of information about the progress of individual pupils. However, this is not being analysed deeply enough to inform governors, leaders and teachers about the progress made by different groups. Consequently, the underachievement is not being tackled efficiently enough, and opportunities for additional support and training to improve the quality of teaching in order to meet the needs of specific groups of pupils are being missed.

The quality of teaching has not consistently improved across the school since the last inspection. Teachers' expectations are not high enough to enable all pupils, particularly the most able and those in Years 3 and 5, to achieve their full potential. Pupils told me that they find some of the work too easy. Leaders confirmed that they had previously not tracked the progress of the most-able pupils but are now beginning to do so.

Leaders do not compare the progress and attainment of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding with that of other pupils in all year groups. This leads to gaps in leaders' understanding of the 'whole school' picture. Unconfirmed information from the end of Key Stage 2 assessments in 2015 shows that there is no gap between the attainment of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding and other pupils. However, this is because, compared to the 2014 results, there was a sharp drop in the expected progress and attainment of other pupils in mathematics and writing. Leaders have not implemented a new pupil premium action plan following the pupil

premium review in July 2015. This needs to be written urgently because leaders and governors are unable to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the expenditure without using clear success criteria to measure from. I note that you have recently taken on the responsibility for overseeing pupil premium expenditure in greater detail.

Not all teachers are following the school's marking policy, which means some work is not marked and pupils are not routinely responding to teachers' comments. As a result, pupils' progress is not as rapid as it could be.

Pupils are attentive in lessons and want to learn. They readily answered teachers' questions and were polite and friendly to each other. Although pupils say there is some misbehaviour in each class, they are confident that teachers deal with this well. Pupils are enthused by the school's motto, 'Be the best you can be', and the learning behaviours that the school is promoting. This term's theme has been about teamwork and pupils could clearly explain the benefits of teamwork, and were eager to receive certificates in assembly if they had worked well in a team.

All leaders, governors and teachers are committed to raising achievement. The school improvement plan addresses the areas requiring improvement that were identified at the recent inspection. You correctly recognised the need to restructure the leadership team to enable effective practitioners to spread good practice beyond the year group that they work in. Your two new assistant headteachers have made a good start to overseeing the planning and work of teachers across the school. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this work and their leadership of the two new year group leaders. The NQT has an experienced mentor and is being supported for her induction year.

The leader responsible for overseeing the progress of disabled pupils, and those with special educational needs, regularly reviews the effectiveness of teaching programmes to check if they are improving pupils' progress. The leader is beginning to make closer checks on the quality of teaching, for pupils who receive additional support, to ensure that teaching meets their needs well enough.

External support

The local authority has supported the school well. A consultant has worked with teachers to review how lessons are being taught, in order to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving. The school is going to continue with this strategy but will refine the focus for the lesson study. Training for governors has been organised to help them analyse data.

The local authority has effectively brokered support from a local outstanding school to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers from the school have visited Parks Primary School and have a clear overview of the quality of teaching. However, more work must be done to improve the proportion of consistently good teaching, particularly in Years 3 and 5.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester City local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch
Her Majesty's Inspector