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Ms Lesley Barringer
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Dear Ms Barringer

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Osbalwick Primary Schools

Following my visit to your school on 10 November 2017, 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 was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in November 2014, 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure the rapid progress of disadvantaged pupils in all classes
- continue to increase the rate of progress of pupils in key stage 1.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. We visited classrooms together and looked at work in pupils' books. I was able to evaluate the school's action plan

and take account of extensive monitoring and evaluation undertaken by senior and middle leaders. Meetings were held with the local authority school improvement partner and the chair of the governing body. Pupils' views were obtained in lessons and at lunchtime.

Context

There has been some turbulence in staffing since the last inspection. In 2015/16, six teachers left, some moving on to promotions, some leaving due to the increased expectations upon them. Last year, another two teachers left the school. Leaders feel confident that they have stabilised staffing and that they have the right team to continue to improve the school.

Leaders and governors are seeking a formal arrangement with the Ebor Academy Trust. Partnership working has already begun, with the intention of joining the trust in summer 2018.

Main findings

You have brought experience and a level head to leading staff at Osbaldwick schools in their journey towards being a good school; you strive for sustaining improvements rather than providing a 'quick fix'. You have employed robust performance management procedures to ensure that staff are fully aware of what they need to do to improve. Through this, you have successfully raised the overall quality of teaching and rooted out inadequate teaching. Some variation in the quality of teaching in some subjects exists, but overall teaching is much improved.

Governors have taken their role as 'critical friend' very seriously. They are regular visitors to school, checking out that what you report is actually happening. Governors regularly seek verbal and written reports from middle leaders to enable them to check on pupils' experience across the whole curriculum, thus ensuring that pupils receive a broad, balanced education. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their lessons, valuing history, physical education and art as highly as English and mathematics.

At the last inspection, although eager, middle leaders were all newly recruited to their roles. You have ensured that middle leaders have received training and development to help hone their skills over time. They have developed into a driven and vibrant team, who take responsibility for improving outcomes for pupils. Middle leaders have played an important role in coaching other teachers so that the majority of teaching in the school is now effectively meeting the needs of pupils. You have synthesised the areas for improvement from the last inspection report into three concise, unambiguous phrases: 'prompt starts', 'challenge' and 'addressing misconceptions'. This has enabled all staff to remain focused on making the changes needed to improve learning. Pupils' books show that teachers are providing

pupils with feedback that helps them to improve their understanding. This is particularly the case in writing.

In the majority of classes, teachers are ensuring that pupils are stretched effectively through tasks that are matched to their needs. Pupils' books show that teachers go to considerable lengths to provide resources that enable pupils to acquire new skills and to practise these skills sufficiently to master them. This is particularly the case in writing and mathematics. Where teachers have been less quick to improve aspects of their practice, you have ensured that they have received targeted support to put things right.

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's work by leaders at all levels are beginning to have a positive influence on the quality of teaching and learning throughout school. Pupils were observed fully involved in and enjoying their learning. Teachers are successfully exploiting online resources to support and promote pupils' quality reading and writing. Parents are able to access pupils' work at home and to share and celebrate pupils' achievements through commenting or 'liking' the work online. Pupils' books show that teachers have been focused and effective in their actions to improve pupils' spelling and handwriting.

You and your staff have worked particularly effectively to develop teaching in mathematics. Teachers ensure that pupils have ample opportunities to develop fluency in number and to apply reasoning skills to explain their methods. As a result, pupils' command of basic skills is much improved and their ability to apply themselves well to a range of problems is evident in their books.

School assessment information shows that, overall, pupils are making improved progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The majority of children enter school with levels of development below those typically seen. Children now make good progress through early years. In 2017, an above-average proportion of children reached a good level of development by the end of Reception.

The proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics screening check is above national figures, putting them in a good position to achieve well in reading and writing. In past years, the number of pupils arriving at, or leaving, the school during Years 1 or 2 has adversely affected pupils' attainment in key stage 1, rendering outcomes below figures seen nationally. This picture is changing and pupils' attainment in this key stage is moving closer to the national average as their progress gradually improves. Even so, you recognise that pupils' progress through key stage 1 could be even better.

In 2017, pupils at the end of key stage 2 made average progress in reading and mathematics, and above-average progress in writing. Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics combined remained below average.

In almost all classes, in reading, writing and mathematics, disadvantaged pupils' attainment lags behind that of other pupils. You commissioned an external review of pupil premium spending and have adopted the recommendations to try to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils and to narrow the gaps in their attainment compared to that of other pupils. However, you acknowledge that progress remains slow for this group of pupils. Other factors have also influenced the progress of this group, as they are more likely to have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and are often newcomers to school.

External support

You have actively sought appropriate assistance from external sources, ensuring that staff receive individualised support to improve their practice. Support has been forthcoming from local schools, local authority consultants and representatives of the Ebor Academy Trust. You have used this support to good effect, observing examples of strong practice in other schools and utilising the skills of consultants to swiftly develop middle leadership at Osbaldwick Primary Schools.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for York. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector