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Mrs K Hill
Eyres Monsell Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hill

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Eyres Monsell Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 June 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 April and May 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 April and May 2016, 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 to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- accelerate the progress that governors are making against their action plan, so that all governors are equally skilled and can be fully effective in their roles.

Evidence

During this monitoring inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the key stage 1 phase leader. I also

met with five members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority. I paid a brief visit to the school's breakfast club. I spoke with a group of pupils and with parents as they brought their children to school in the morning. I visited every class with you to see the learning that was taking place. I examined a range of school documentation, including action plans, minutes of governors' meetings and the single central record. Finally, alongside you and your deputy, I scrutinised a range of pupils' books from every class.

Context

Since the inspection in April and May 2016, you have returned to your post following a period of ill health. The deputy headteacher left the school shortly after the inspection. Another teacher, who had had some absence since June 2016, left the school in December 2016. This class was taught by supply teachers during the autumn term, but a new deputy headteacher took up her post in January 2017 and she has taught the class since her arrival. You have had some difficulty in recruiting a teacher for one of the key stage 2 classes. This class has been taught by a series of supply teachers throughout the year. You recently appointed a key stage 2 phase leader who will take up his post in September 2017.

Main findings

Although disappointed by the outcome of the last inspection, leaders and governors acted swiftly to take action to address the areas for improvement that had been identified. Immediately following the inspection, leaders and governors commissioned a review of governance. Governors acted on recommendations of the review by restructuring their committees, for example. They ensured that they received the appropriate training in safeguarding so that they were sufficiently skilled to carry out this part of their role effectively. They ensured that important actions, such as reviewing the safeguarding policy, were completed without delay to ensure that it complied with the most recent guidance. Two governors left around the time of the inspection and two new governors have taken up their posts. However, the governing body has not been successful in appointing sufficient governors to have a full complement.

Despite getting off to a swift start, governors did not keep up their initial momentum of progress. Several governors found it difficult to undertake all their responsibilities fully and some new governors were still getting to grips with their role. The local authority wrote to governors to express its concerns earlier this year. The local authority supported the governors in writing a tightly focused action plan to ensure that they lost no more time in bringing their skills and knowledge as governors up to a high standard. Governors responded very positively to this action plan, which, at the time of this monitoring inspection, shows that most actions have been undertaken, but that it is still too early to judge the impact of some of their work. Although some governors had already been undertaking monitoring visits to find out about the work of the school, this aspect of their role has increased latterly.

Governors have benefited from useful training from senior leaders and the local authority so that they can undertake monitoring activities effectively. They have a detailed monitoring timetable in place for the next academic year so that this aspect of their work will have a more strategic approach.

Governors now convene before a full board meeting to discuss aspects of the school's work. Earlier this month, for example, governors were supported by leaders and the early years' teachers to improve their understanding of children's progress across the foundation stage, and how teachers assess whether children are reaching a good level of development. Leaders attend governors' meetings to provide additional information about the subject for which they are responsible. These initiatives to improve the governors' skills, knowledge and understanding are proving to be effective.

Since January 2017, you and the chair of governors have met fortnightly to ensure that the chair is kept up to date with what is happening in school. A representative of the local authority has been attending governors' meetings; this supports governors to improve their ability to hold leaders to account. Minutes of recent governors' meetings show that they are asking more searching questions of leaders.

Governors are ambitious for the school and are determined that they will be a fully effective governing body. They have responded well to the support they have received. They are well placed to keep up the momentum and provide effective governance for the school.

Following the inspection, you and the chair of governors, supported by the local authority, compiled a single action plan to set out the improvements that needed to be made. The plan is sufficiently detailed for leaders and governors to check regularly the progress that is being made, which ensures that developments are kept on track.

Since the inspection, leaders have continued their drive to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching across the school. They have implemented several initiatives to help teachers to match pupils' learning to their abilities and to enable pupils to understand just what they need to do to improve their work. Leaders encourage pupils to be reflective. Pupils told me that the recently introduced 'toolkit' for mathematics helped them to think about the mathematical skills they had drawn upon during their lessons.

During this monitoring inspection, pupils across the school were engaged in their learning. Teachers and pupils demonstrated strong subject knowledge across a range of subjects. Typically, teachers stepped in quickly to address misconceptions and promote further learning. For example, in one class, the teacher skilfully involved pupils in a discussion about whether Sir Isaac Newton had invented gravity or whether he had discovered it. In another class, pupils were making very effective use of a range of resources which the teacher had provided to help them understand the mathematical problems they were tackling. Pupils told me they

found these resources helpful. You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas of the school you plan to develop. Having made effective use of the single action plan, you have revised the way that you approach improvement planning, in readiness for the forthcoming academic year.

Pupils' books showed that they are making progress from their different starting points. Recent initiatives to ensure that any gaps in pupils' skills or knowledge are more quickly identified have resulted in teachers providing pupils with support and work that is well matched to their ability.

Pupils who met with me spoke positively about their school. They enjoy taking responsibility as members of the school council, for example. They were confident that, if they needed support, trusted adults in school would help them.

External support

The local authority has provided much-needed and helpful support following the last inspection. It has provided helpful training for governors in how to undertake their monitoring roles effectively and how to hold leaders to account. A representative of the local authority attends governors' meetings to support this process further. They have provided some support to the governors in their recruitment drive, but this has yet to bear fruit.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector