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Mr Rob Litten
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Litten

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to New Road Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 September 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken 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 received a judgement of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection.

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

The school should take further action to:

- develop and implement, in all subjects, curriculum plans that are appropriately ambitious for all and that make clear the key concepts that pupils should revisit over time
- ensure that all teachers plan sequences of tasks that secure pupils' subject knowledge before requiring them to apply it or to move on to new work.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Aspire Learning Trust and members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plans, made visits to lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at work in their books.

Context

Since the previous inspection, staffing and governance at the school have remained stable. Leaders are now responsible for the nursery, which was run independently prior to the beginning of the current academic year. The number of pupils attending the school is rising and a building programme is under way to accommodate this growth.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have used their accurate judgements about standards at the school to determine appropriate and suitably prioritised improvement plans. These are being implemented at speed because leaders insist on high standards and make sure that staff get the support they need to meet them. Leaders respond quickly and effectively if their checks on aspects of the school's work indicate further improvement is needed.

Leaders have made appropriate changes to the mathematics curriculum. Staff have benefited considerably from the significant amount of additional training in the teaching of mathematics. As a result, teachers typically plan activities that ensure that pupils develop sound mathematical understanding. Through regular practice, such as of multiplication tables, most pupils become fluent in their calculations. This helps them to grapple successfully with tasks involving problem-solving and reasoning. Pupils are asked to complete such work on a more frequent basis than was the case at the time of the previous inspection. They often approach these tasks with enthusiasm and resilience, trying hard if initially unsure.

The proportions of pupils achieving both the expected and higher standards in mathematics in the key stage two national tests have increased markedly since the previous inspection and are above the national averages. Sometimes, however, teachers try to move pupils on to complete problem-solving tasks before their mathematical knowledge is fluent enough. When this happens, pupils struggle to complete this work.

Leaders and teachers are adapting curriculum plans to ensure that these set out, step by step, the order in which pupils will learn new things. This is ensuring that each new step of learning builds on a secure foundation. In mathematics, for example, curriculum plans make clear the order in which pupils need to learn new

concepts and methods, and how these are to be revisited regularly to promote pupils' fluency and understanding. In art, curriculum plans set out how learning will promote pupils' development of artistic devices and techniques and their knowledge of the history of art. During this inspection, Year 2 pupils were able to use subject-specific language to describe their drawings and reflect upon how far they had met the lesson objectives. Subject curriculum plans also typically provide guidance to teachers about how, and how often, they should check what it is that pupils know and ensure that pupils can readily recall what they have learned. In the foundation subjects, some curriculum plans are insufficiently ambitious for all pupils, including the most able. This is because they do not specify the concepts or 'big ideas' that pupils should revisit over time in different contexts.

Leaders insist that all staff have high expectations for what disadvantaged pupils with high potential are able to achieve. Teachers set precise targets for these pupils' progress through the curriculum in different subjects and review these regularly. Teachers ensure that those pupils who need it are given timely and precisely focused support. Leaders also make sure that these pupils attend well and enjoy access to a rich variety of experiences, including educational trips and visits, such as to the British Museum. Teachers encourage pupils to talk about these experiences, introduce them to new words to help describe them and encourage pupils to use these in their writing. This is helping pupils to expand their vocabularies and express their ideas more fully and clearly, such as when talking about 'tempo' in music.

Teachers demonstrate high expectations for all pupils and encourage them to learn from their mistakes and to keep trying. Work that is set is often demanding, and pupils are willing to attempt 'challenge tasks', which are usually planned carefully. Through questioning and checks on pupils' work, teachers identify when individual pupils are struggling and why. Typically, teachers correct any misconceptions quickly, although, sometimes, pupils move on to a task involving new learning before their knowledge is secure. Often, teachers use questions to encourage pupils to think more clearly, asking them to explain their ideas or to try another approach to solving a problem.

Leaders provide staff with regular opportunities to share ideas about how to teach specific aspects of the curriculum. This includes sharing strategies that help pupils to remember things and, in the words of the executive headteacher, that 'interrupt the process of their forgetting again'. Teachers use a range of techniques to check pupils' recall of key facts, techniques and ideas and to make it more automatic.

Governors and trustees challenge and support leaders effectively. Trustees are enabling leaders and governors to focus on the school's improvement priorities linked to improving the quality of education by ensuring that the school's ongoing building works are managed by others. Governors gain a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through asking leaders well-judged questions. Governors, including the trust's CEO, follow this up by making regular

visits to the school. These include discussions with pupils and leaders. Leaders and governors review progress towards the school improvement plan targets on a continuous basis. Governors have placed significant emphasis upon ensuring that the curriculum supports pupils' learning within English and mathematics. They are now starting to support and challenge leaders more regarding the foundation subjects.

External support

Teachers and leaders are benefiting significantly from their engagement in a wide range of training activities, including those provided by a local mathematics hub. This work has helped teachers to sequence pupils' learning appropriately so that, increasingly, pupils can tackle problem-solving activities with confidence. Other training is helping leaders to improve the quality of their curriculum planning and is ensuring that teachers continue to develop their subject-specific knowledge.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard
Her Majesty's Inspector