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Mrs Jennifer Wightman
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wightman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sundon Park Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 30 January 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 March 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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 that an updated child protection policy is ratified by the governing body and published on the school's website as a matter of urgency, and that all staff are issued with, and read, the latest 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016) guidance
- ensure that the special educational needs information report is published on the school's website
- improve the outcomes of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

- develop subject leaders' skills in identifying effective teaching in their subject areas.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the chair and one other member of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. I also visited every class to observe pupils' learning and to look at the work in their books. I scrutinised the school's records of recruitment checks of staff, and sampled a number of personnel files. I looked at the school's website to check compliance against what the school is expected to publish.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have appointed a new leader for mathematics. The deputy headteacher now leads English. For the first time in the school's history, pupils of White British heritage now make up less than half of the school's population.

Main findings

The school improvement plan correctly identifies the key priorities to enable the school to become an effective provider within a challenging timescale. It is clear who leads each improvement initiative, and who checks the actions taken in order to measure for success. You have rightly identified three times during the life of the current plan when you will measure for success. The plan is based on the financial year and is nearing its end. It is, therefore, important that you accurately evaluate the impact of actions taken to date in order to produce a new plan starting in April 2017.

Subject leaders have also produced their own action plans which follow a similar approach to the whole-school plan. These plans have empowered subject leaders more in taking responsibility for their subjects, and are used as a valuable tool by you and the governing body to hold these colleagues to account for their own performance and the outcomes that pupils achieve. Although subject leaders play their part in raising standards through visiting lessons, usually with a specific focus, not all are sufficiently skilled in making judgements on the quality of teaching over time.

You rightly responded to the outcome of the previous inspection by tackling weaknesses in the quality of teaching as a priority. You have achieved this by making clear your high expectations of what constitutes effective teaching, and sharing these with staff at every opportunity. You gathered teachers' views of

teaching from staff meetings, and gained parents' views through the use of surveys, in order to produce a list of 'non-negotiables' to ensure a greater consistency in the classroom. The evidence from your own monitoring activities demonstrates that the quality of teaching over time has improved. My visits to lessons and my scrutiny of pupils' books demonstrate that improvements in teaching are having a positive impact on the progress that pupils are making.

Pupils' outcomes in Year 6 in 2016 met the government's floor standards, which was not the case in 2015. You continue to analyse pupils' progress more sharply, focusing particularly on key groups of pupils, including most-able pupils, those who are disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your regular testing of pupils in Year 6 through the use of past public examination papers indicates that outcomes are improving. You also acknowledge that outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities need to be better to enable them to compare favourably with all pupils nationally. You have also trained pupils to tackle examination-style questions by ensuring that homework assignments closely resemble the tasks they will face in these examinations.

The impact of your support work and intervention strategies for disadvantaged pupils and for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is carefully considered, and support is modified regularly following meetings to discuss individual pupils' progress. As you group pupils by ability only in mathematics in Years 5 and 6, you have ensured that the needs of the most able pupils are met more effectively. You have done this through well-targeted training on how to identify who the most able pupils are, and how to match the work to their needs more appropriately. This work is reaping rewards and is evident through your regular analysis of pupils' outcomes, for which you hold subject leaders to account.

You endeavour to engage the harder-to-reach parents in their children's education and your family worker has helped to bring more of these parents on board in supporting what the school aims to achieve. You have an open-door policy to allow parents to express their concerns and you routinely gather parents' views through surveys. Indeed, as a direct result of one survey, you provided parents with a useful session on how to help their child with English and mathematics. Your own very recent survey completed by 160 parents across all year groups, is much more positive about the school than the results in Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

The governing body continues to provide an appropriate degree of support and challenge. Governors ask more searching questions when receiving the headteacher's report, and they have a more accurate understanding of how well different groups of pupils are achieving. The chair of the governing body uses her expertise as a serving senior school leader to evaluate the school's effectiveness through regular visits to the school, including to lessons.

My scrutiny of the school's website identified some flaws around what a school must

publish. For example, there is no special educational needs information report and the published safeguarding policy is out of date, as it does not reflect the latest guidance contained in 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016).

External support

The school draws on the support and challenge of the local authority as and when required. Termly meetings to review standards and effectiveness led by the local authority ensure accountability. In addition, the school improvement adviser's monthly visits to the school help to validate the school's judgements on its own effectiveness. The local authority is of the view that leadership at all levels has strengthened, and this is helping the school to tackle identified weaknesses more effectively, allowing the local authority to reduce the amount of support it had previously offered.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector