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Miss T Chappell
Headteacher
Seghill First School
Seghill
Cramlington
Northumberland
NE23 7SB

Dear Miss Chappell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Seghill First School

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 2016, 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 January 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 January 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are more focused and implemented swiftly
- make sure that information about how well pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding achieve is compared to how well all pupils achieve nationally, particularly the most able pupils eligible for pupil premium funding
- develop, enhance and utilise the early years outdoor provision at a much faster pace.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other leaders, and representatives of the governing body including the current chair, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. In addition to this, I met with the school improvement partner from the local authority. The school improvement plans and the school's system for checking pupil progress were evaluated. Other documents were scrutinised, including the outcomes of monitoring activities, reports to governors and local authority notes of visits.

Context

Since the previous inspection, one teacher has commenced maternity leave. This class is being covered by a temporary teacher. One member of staff is still on maternity leave. One member of staff has returned from maternity leave. Two new governors have been appointed.

Main findings

You have a clear view of what needs to improve and have identified in the school's 'Getting to good plan' how this will be done. Recent monitoring of this plan by you and your governors shows that actions are being evaluated and improvements are being made where necessary.

Leaders have ensured that there are now increased opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical basic skills knowledge during specific slots allocated in the timetable across the week. Furthermore, staff have received training on how to improve pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics. This whole-school approach to improve fluency and deepen pupils' learning is having an impact on standards, which have improved since the previous inspection. The mathematics subject leader is now developing this further with the introduction of the 'Superhero Challenge', and by ensuring that homework is linked to key skill mathematical development.

Leaders have developed a much more robust system to track children's progress in the early years. This results in identifying their next steps much more swiftly, and delivering an intervention programme when necessary. Children are identified for additional speech and language therapy, and a commercial programme has been successfully implemented to ensure that they develop the skills they need more rapidly. This has resulted in more children than previously attaining a good level of development. The indoor environment has been reorganised and children are able to readily access a range of resources to enhance their learning. This is ensuring that children are becoming more independent in their thinking and their actions. The outdoor area is currently being developed by leaders. They have visited a local outstanding first school to gain inspiration to develop the grounds. This area requires further work at a much faster pace to ensure that there are no

opportunities missed to learn and develop children's skills in the outdoor environment.

You now have a clear strategy for improving attendance and reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. Pupils are encouraged to attend school regularly and are rewarded with a range of certificates and awards. Furthermore, attendance league tables are announced during school assembly time and pupils enjoy the competitive nature of winning each week. You are not afraid to enforce formal legal procedures with those families who are absent too often, and have issued a number of fixed penalty notices to these parents. This consistent approach of reward, praise and consequence has resulted in improved attendance for most pupils.

Since the inspection and subsequent review of governance, it is clear that governors are actively involved in collecting evidence about your work and other leaders' work. Governors are holding you all to account for the impact of actions taken. They now have defined roles and key responsibilities for specific aspects of securing improvement. This includes identified governors responsible for pupil premium funding and governors responsible for improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is a clear governor monitoring plan. The plan ensures that new governors, alongside experienced governors, can use the skills they bring to the governing body to strengthen the strategic leadership of the school.

External support

A pupil premium review has been carried out since the previous inspection. This needs to be reviewed as a matter of urgency, as it fails to identify clear actions for leaders to take to improve the quality of provision explicitly for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, leaders do not have specific enough actions in their improvement plans, and governors are not clear about what is being done to improve outcomes for these pupils. Therefore, they cannot fully hold leaders to account in this area.

The local authority has provided a school improvement partner to challenge the headteacher. This has been effective as it has provided a constant and consistent support for you during some complex situations. In addition, this has also provided opportunities for some leaders to visit local outstanding schools to observe good practice.

The Sele teaching school has supported you and other leaders effectively in a range of different areas, including the early years and moderation of work to ensure assessments are accurate. In addition to this, the Seaton Valley Learning Partnership has been instrumental in providing a network for you with other headteachers in the area to develop your assessment systems which track pupil progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Lithgow
Her Majesty's Inspector