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Mrs Amanda Bartholomew
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bartholomew

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Anston Park Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 21 September 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 2017. 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 2017, 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 for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- make sure that improvement plans have clear timescales for when actions will happen and show how the actions will improve pupils' progress
- develop the role of subject coordinators so they play a full and active role in improving the quality of teaching and learning
- ensure that all pupils, including the most able and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are challenged across the wider curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher and three subject coordinators. Together, you and I undertook a tour of the school, visited classrooms and sampled pupils' current work. I met with six governors and had a phone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I evaluated a range of action plans, behaviour logs, teaching records, minutes from recent governing body meetings and reports from your external educational consultant.

Context

There have been major staffing changes since the last inspection. Six full-time teachers have left the school, including two Year 5 teachers, one of whom was the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Three Year 6 teachers and one recently qualified teacher have also left. New appointments include four newly or recently qualified teachers, a new Year 4 teacher, one learning mentor and one teaching assistant. You are currently taking on the role of SENCo in the short term.

Main findings

You and your deputy headteacher make for a strong team. Together, you have shown a resolute will in wanting pupils and staff to be the best they can be. Although disappointed with the inspection outcomes, they did not come as a shock. You know your school well and have not shied away from tackling underperformance.

Since the inspection, you have not wasted time and have made a number of improvements, especially in relation to improving pupils' behaviour. There is now a simple and easy-to-understand behaviour policy in place. Teachers are consistently following this. Pupils and staff confirm that everyone is 'singing from the same hymn sheet'.

You have also developed effective support that helps pupils learn from their behavioural mistakes. As a result, there has been a sharp reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils I spoke to confirm that classrooms are calmer places, allowing them to learn better.

You recognise that some of your subject coordinators are more effective than others in checking on and improving teaching. Inexperienced subject coordinators are at an early stage of development and so are currently having less of an impact on improving pupils' progress. Pupils' work across the wider curriculum shows that there is still more to be done by subject coordinators to ensure that pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able, are challenged.

Staff morale and motivation are on the rise after a difficult period of staff turbulence. Teachers feel empowered and share a real team spirit. Staff say that they feel listened to and are able to make valuable contributions towards further improving the school. Newly and recently qualified teachers feel well supported and this has helped them get off to a smooth start this term. Older pupils I spoke to said that teaching is more interesting and 'has more energy about it'.

School improvement plans are not as helpful as they could be in driving change at a rapid pace. It is sometimes unclear exactly when actions will happen and what the intended impact will be for pupils. Governors are not afraid to pose challenging questions. Governors agree that current improvement plans are not as clear as they could be and this is making it more difficult to hold you and other leaders to account.

External support

The school is benefiting from a range of high-quality external support. The local authority has been effective in signposting strong practice in other local schools. As a result of work with Rawmarsh Rosehill and Kiveton Park Meadow junior schools, improvements have been made to the teaching of literacy and reading in particular. An external consultant also provides helpful advice and guidance that have helped refine and sharpen your work in improving the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector