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Eleanor Prestage
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Prestage

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Alfred Salter Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 April 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 October 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupils develop their skills in science more consistently across the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior and middle leaders. I met with a representative of the local authority, four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. During these meetings, I explored the actions taken by leaders since the last inspection. I reviewed a range

of documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, reports from an external consultancy, the school's plans for improvement and leaders' evaluations of the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection, one senior leader has begun maternity leave. You have enhanced the capacity of the senior leadership team with the appointment of four temporary assistant headteachers. Two teachers have left the school and been replaced by two permanent members of staff. Two further teachers have returned from maternity leave. There are still three supply teachers whose positions the school is currently advertising, to ensure that permanent staff are in place for September 2017.

Main findings

The previous inspection report was published less than one month into your headship at the school. The inspection team judged that you had established a strong vision for improvement in the school. Senior leaders, parents and governors were found to be firmly behind you. You have now been in post for half an academic year. There is no doubt you have brought a new tenacious drive to school improvement. You have ensured higher expectations from staff and pupils. You are enabling staff to take responsibility for leading their areas of responsibility. Consequently, staff morale is high and the whole community is behind your drive to ensure that each pupil achieves their potential.

You have rightly focused on developing greater depth in leadership. The previous inspection found that middle leaders had too little time to use their skills and expertise. Classroom-based leaders now have clearly defined responsibilities. You have given them time to lead and to check on the impact of their work. For example, middle leaders have regularly checked the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and attainment. Consequently, they are driving improvement through regular feedback and discussions with staff. Teaching is becoming more consistent across the school, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.

You have quickly set clear expectations for teachers' feedback to pupils. Your leaders have worked with staff to model these new expectations. Consequently, feedback to pupils is now more consistent and meaningful. You have taken account of the Department for Education's reports on reducing teacher workload. This has helped to ensure that your staff focus their feedback to pupils on overcoming pupils' misconceptions. Pupils are now quicker at using feedback to overcome identified errors and misconceptions. This is undoubtedly helping improve pupils' progress.

Staff across the school have increased expectations. Performance management of staff is based on exploring pupils' progress. Additionally, regular meetings with staff

ensure that they continue to be held to account for pupils' progress. Your leadership team is rightly mindful of key groups in your school. Equally, you are ensuring that pupils who have underachieved in the past are making rapid progress to catch up with their peers. In nearly all year groups, pupils are now making better progress. The difference in achievement between groups is diminishing, except in Year 6 and Year 1. You have taken speedy action to ensure that pupils in these year groups catch up.

You have ensured that assessment is more accurate than at the time of the previous inspection. You have worked with other schools locally to ensure that your judgements about pupils' work are consistent. You have also made effective use of the local authority and an independent early years consultant. You have taken charge of their involvement in the school and directed their work towards ensuring that judgements about progress and attainment are accurate. Staff are more confident as a result, and you have clear evidence of the progress children make from the early years to Year 6.

You restructured the staff team immediately after the previous inspection. This helped, in particular, to ensure that good practice is shared across the early years team. Staff are providing children with greater opportunities to learn to make marks and explore writing. Improvement in writing is evident across the early years, with many opportunities for children to write with a purpose, for example when role playing. Displaying and celebrating children's writing is now given a high priority every day. This is helping staff more systematically capture evidence of the progress made by children. Training has ensured that staff can now make assessments without interrupting children's learning. Children are better able to develop their interest in learning as a result. The development of the early years classroom learning activities has also helped children better engage and sustain their interest in their learning activities. Resources are now suitable for the age of the children, and are freely accessible without needing support from adults. You have ensured that there is a clear plan to further improve teaching in the early years.

During the inspection I sampled pupils' learning and work in science. You agreed that pupils could make better progress in their science work. Pupils' work showed they had infrequent opportunities to develop their skills in planning, conducting, monitoring and evaluating simple experiments. Consequently, Year 6 pupils are not as well prepared as they should be for the secondary science curriculum.

Governors have taken greater responsibility for finding out about the work of the school. They are visiting the school more regularly and reporting back to the whole governing body. All governors have seized opportunities to develop their skills and understanding of education. Governors are providing greater challenge in meetings. Records show they are closely checking on the progress and attainment of key groups. New governors have further strengthened the governing body. They have demonstrated quickly an ability to challenge leaders thoroughly.

External support

You are drawing well on focused support available through your local authority and schools in Southwark, and beyond. You have ensured that you have taken charge of identifying what you need from external support. Consequently, you are assessing the success of working with your partners. You are using this understanding to reshape and refine your plans for improvement. This has been instrumental in helping to improve quickly the learning environment in the early years.

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

Yours sincerely

David Storrie
Her Majesty's Inspector