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30 November 2017

Mrs Samantha Thompson
Head of Academy
England Lane Academy
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Dear Mrs Thompson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to England Lane Academy

Following my visit to your school on 17 November 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 the trust 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:

- improve the quality of teaching, continuing to use the most effective practice within school and the trust, to ensure that teaching is consistently supporting pupils in making strong progress
- continue work with specialist providers and parents to support pupils in successfully managing their behaviour and, subsequently, reducing the number of exclusions
- make sure that records of the thorough checks on teaching precisely identify the strengths to be shared with other teachers and the aspects that most need improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the executive principal, middle leaders, the director of primary education for the trust and representatives from the governing body (the Education Advisory Board) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's action plans were reviewed alongside the leaders' summary evaluation of the performance of the school. You and I visited classrooms together and looked in pupils' books to check on their learning and the progress they are making. I met with a group of pupils and heard some of them read. I spent time reviewing documents, including records of the work of the governors and records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.

Context

There have been a considerable number of changes in leadership and staffing since the last inspection. A new executive principal has been appointed from the trust. Three teachers have left. Two teachers who are new to teaching have been appointed, as well as a teacher for the early years. The vice-principal is on secondment from a school within the trust to support leadership, including the leadership of mathematics, and Year 6 teaching. The assistant principal is currently absent. A long-term supply teacher is teaching a class, with support from a director of learning from the trust. The middle leaders are all new to their roles here since September 2017.

Following concerns about the suitability of the school building, a new build has been scheduled. Work is due to start on this in the summer of 2018.

Main findings

A united and determined approach to improvement, from school leaders, governors and the trust, is ensuring that pupils are now making better progress from their starting points. There is an honest and accurate view that outcomes still need improvement, but the ambition and commitment to achieve this is apparent.

You and the executive principal have a very clear understanding of what work needs to be done to bring about improvements. The priorities you have identified are the right ones. Your strong understanding of what good teaching looks like supports you in identifying aspects of teaching that need further support.

Teaching is improving, although you accurately identify that there are still some inconsistencies in how well teaching meets pupils' needs. Leaders' well-planned and timely checks on the quality of teaching are ensuring that support is put in place swiftly where it is needed. However, the records of these checks do not consistently and clearly identify which aspects most need improvement.

The school's assessment systems give you detailed information about the progress

that all pupils are making, across the year and from their starting points. You are rightly focused on helping pupils to catch up to meet the national age-related expectations, but also on challenging pupils to deepen their learning and reach higher standards. All staff understand the assessment information. It supports professional conversations between leaders and teachers about the progress that pupils are making and how to make this progress more rapid.

Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas that need improvement. They understand the journey the school has been on since it joined Delta Academies Trust. They value the direction and support that the trust brings. They work well with trust directors and advisers to refine their own challenge and support to school leaders.

Middle leaders, new to their leadership posts in September 2017, bring strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm to their roles. They are working alongside advisers from the trust and school leaders to develop their own practice so that they can fully support teachers in improving pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers who are new to teaching are being well supported in identifying the needs of their pupils and the next steps that pupils need to take in their learning.

Outcomes in phonics have improved because of better-established routines and teachers' modelling, which are a result of whole-staff training. Pupils' improving phonics skills are supporting the fluency with which they read. Leaders have accurately identified that developing pupils' fluency in reading needs further focus as pupils progress through the school.

Work to improve standards in reading is high-profile around school and in lessons. Pupils enthusiastically explain the rewards and celebrations that take place when they read regularly. The reward of being able to have a non-uniform day on a Friday if they have read five times in a week is particularly popular. Leaders have introduced stimulating displays and reading areas, such as the reading den in the early years outdoor area, to engage pupils in reading. Since the closure of the local community library, staff have taken the initiative to open up the school's own library during the holidays, so that pupils can still have regular access to new books to read. There is a clear rationale for planning different teaching sessions each day to develop pupils' fluency and understanding, based on an assessment of pupils' prior performance. The use of whole-class, high-quality texts is motivating pupils, giving them a thirst for reading and helping them to deepen their understanding of the author's intention, and the impact this has on the reader.

A significant number of pupils have complex needs that sometimes affect their behaviour. Leaders actively promote positive behaviour at all opportunities, but also are clear about their expectations in acceptable standards of behaviour. Rewards, such as the school's points system and visits to the 'swap shop', are focused on the school's current key priorities of good attendance, punctuality, regular reading,

completing homework and displaying exceptional behaviour. A small number of pupils present particularly challenging behaviour and the exclusion rate is currently higher than that seen nationally. School leaders are very keen to address this and have started work with a specialist provider to develop further their nurture work to support these pupils effectively.

Pupils' attendance is improving steadily. You have tightened systems for checking on pupils on their first day of absence and making home visits when necessary. The school's direction to pupils and their families about the importance of good attendance is well communicated. Displays, information on newsletters and via texts, and rewards, such as the attendance awards each term and tokens for the 'swap shop', make sure that expectations in attendance are clear to everyone.

Leaders have been eager to improve communication between the school and parents and carers. A range of different ways to inform and celebrate with parents are in place. This includes sharing information through social media, texts, invitations to take part in learning and regular assemblies. In the early years, the way that staff share information about children's learning has been carefully considered. Parents are now able to log into a new online system to see records of their children's learning and the activities they are taking part in during the day.

Outcomes for children in the early years show a steady rise over time in the proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of their time in Reception. From their entry to nursery, with skills that are below those that are typical for their age, children make good progress and now achieve outcomes that are similar to the national averages. Improved systems and teacher knowledge to assess children's learning and identify the next steps they need to take, across the whole curriculum, are supporting this improvement. The classroom areas of learning are planned carefully to encourage children to test out and develop their skills, independently and with each other, across all areas of the curriculum.

Leaders have reorganised the way that teaching assistants support pupils, to maximise the progress that pupils are making. Teaching assistants give direction and support to groups of pupils, of different abilities in class, depending on the task. Much training is delivered jointly to teachers and teaching assistants. Support staff in the early years work with teachers to check on children's learning and plan the next steps that they need to take. This has ensured a better understanding of each child's needs, and more specific direction to children in what to do next as a result.

External support

The trust's highly focused support and challenge are having a positive impact on supporting school leaders in securing better outcomes for pupils. High-quality, purposeful documentation, including assessment information and action plans, as well as frequent conversations with school leaders, demonstrate the trust's relentless support in making the school the very best it can be.

The raft of support available through the trust is impressive. School leaders and governors welcome highly professional discussions about the aspects of leadership and teaching that most need improvement. These lead into decisive actions being taken by the trust in the type of support needed. This includes support from: the executive principal; directors of learning, who support teaching in the classroom; the director of reading; work with other schools within the trust; and regular leadership network meetings. Although leaders are clear that there is still work to be done, the partnership and shared vision between the school and trust are securing school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of Delta Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley
Her Majesty's Inspector