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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mary Berkeley-Agyepong
Winterbourne Junior Girls' School
Winterbourne Road
Thornton Heath
Surrey
CR7 7QT

Dear Mrs Berkeley-Agyepong

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Winterbourne Junior Girls' School

Following my visit to your school on 29 April 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 October 2015. 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 leaders keep a close eye on the impact of recently implemented changes so that practice becomes thoroughly embedded throughout the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with senior leaders, English and mathematics leaders, a group of teachers representing each year group, and two representatives of the local authority. A meeting was also held with five governors, including the chair and vice-chair, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Short visits were made to

each class, jointly with senior leaders. The two head girls led a tour of the school. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to safeguarding.

Context

The governing body has undergone significant change to its membership. Five governors resigned following the previous inspection, with five new members being appointed. Two teachers have left the school. One teacher started work at the school in September 2015, with another teacher, previously without responsibility for a class, filling the other vacancy. A member of staff has been appointed as an emotional literacy support assistant and school librarian. A school business manager was appointed in November 2015.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection leaders and governors have made substantial improvements to the quality of their leadership and to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. No time has been wasted in bringing about the changes needed.

The school capitalised on the numerous resignations from the governing body following the inspection to establish a board of appropriately qualified and determined governors. Governors now adopt a more businesslike and professional approach to their work. The challenge governors provide to leaders has been stepped up considerably. They ask well-judged questions to provide support and challenge. Governors have a good understanding of the changes that have taken place in school since the previous inspection. They now take a more thorough approach to ensuring that agreed actions are followed through and that they have the desired impact. One member of the governing body is responsible for ensuring that governors undertake regular training to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. Bespoke training has provided greater clarity about the role of the governing body and its focus on strategic leadership, as opposed to the day-to-day running of the school. New governors have undertaken training for their roles and in safeguarding. It is indicative of governors' renewed sense of purpose and determination that recently completed training has already increased the level of challenge evident in meetings. Each governor is now linked to a curriculum subject as well as to other aspects of the school's work, for example the provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Meetings between link governors and subject leaders ensure that governors are well informed about developments and are able to influence school development planning at a strategic level.

The school's development plan now includes realistic milestones which allow leaders to track pupils' progress towards end-of-year targets for each year group. Leaders have taken a similar approach to setting targets for the proportion of good and better teaching. Well-judged actions break down the plan's overarching aims into manageable activities.

The school's approach to the teaching of mathematics has been thoroughly overhauled. The focus is now, rightly, on ensuring that pupils gain a thorough grasp of concepts before moving on to more advanced work. This ensures that pupils develop a sound foundation of basic skills which support their subsequent learning well. Strong leadership of mathematics has enthused teachers and helped them to understand the value of the renewed approach. Teachers now have a good appreciation of the associated principles. Pupils are developing a deeper understanding of their work because of the significantly greater opportunity they now have to explain their thinking and to justify their solutions to mathematical problems. Practical resources support this approach effectively, with their use being embedded within the curriculum plans. Teachers are clear about the positive impact of these changes.

A new policy for the teaching of handwriting has been implemented. While there are some exceptions, the majority of writing throughout the school is neat and in cursive script. Teachers are clear about what is expected and pupils have planned opportunities to practise handwriting regularly.

Expectations of the feedback that teachers provide for pupils about their work have been refined. Teachers' comments are now more purposeful. They are expected to either provide the opportunity for pupils to consolidate what they have already learned, or deepen their understanding through attempting a further challenge. In the majority of cases, pupils respond promptly to these comments, as required by the school's policy. However, some pupils do not, and are not challenged to do so by their teacher.

A sustained focus on ensuring that the quality of teaching continues to rise has led to teachers thinking carefully about the level of work each pupil is given. This has benefited all pupils, and particularly the most able. One consequence of this is the improvement in pupils' attitudes to learning, in their engagement in lessons and in their understanding of the value of their education.

Rewarding good attendance has improved the overall figure to be broadly in line with the national average. Leaders take a robust approach to tackling unauthorised attendance. They are not afraid to issue penalty notices when other means of improving attendance have been unsuccessful.

External support

The school is making good use of the resources available through the local authority. Local authority officers have provided continued challenge for the school, carrying out termly school progress review meetings. These meetings, attended by school leaders, governors and local authority staff, check that pupils are on track to meet end of year targets as well as considering the improvements to the quality of teaching, and to leadership and management. To inform its knowledge of the school's work, local authority staff carried out a review of teaching and learning in

March 2016. This provided a valuable opportunity for senior leaders to work alongside local authority school improvement colleagues to moderate their judgements.

Local authority staff have provided bespoke training for governors, ensuring that they are clear about their roles and that they are well equipped to provide the required support and challenge to school leaders. Tailored support for the mathematics leader as well as her attendance at local authority-run training courses has enabled her to lead changes to the curriculum and to the approach to teaching mathematics with determination and enthusiasm. Support from the local authority school improvement partner has been highly valued by the headteacher, providing opportunities to evaluate the progress the school has made.

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

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Loukes
Her Majesty's Inspector