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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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8 September 2023

Kate Atkin
Headteacher
Mallard Primary School
Cedar Road
Balby
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN4 9HU

Dear Mrs Atkin,

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Mallard Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 17 July 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, other staff and governors the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited your early years provision, met with leaders responsible for reading and listened to pupils read. I met with a group of pupils and looked at a selection of curriculum documentation. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Mallard Primary School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

There have been several changes in staffing at the school since the previous inspection. Some new staff have not yet taken up their posts. Your appointment as headteacher has been significant in bringing about rapid improvement at the school. You recognise there is more to be done to embed the changes that have taken place so far.

You have addressed weaknesses in the early years curriculum so that it is now carefully considered and more effective. Thought has been given to what children already know and can do when they join from Nursery. The curriculum builds on this as well as allowing opportunity for children to develop their talents and interests. You have improved the quality and variety of learning resources available to children in the indoor provision. You know that the next priority is improving the outdoor learning environment in a similar way.

There is now a consistent approach to helping pupils at an early stage of learning to read improve their phonic knowledge. The curriculum in early reading is now taught with greater consistency. Staff understand how to help pupils get better at reading. You have planned a range of interventions to support the weakest readers. Ongoing quality assurance has enabled you to identify where additional staff training is required. You have worked with other leaders to review the books that pupils read. This includes improving your library spaces. Pupils talked enthusiastically about opportunities to read in the classroom and in their own time.

You have worked alongside other leaders to review the wider school curriculum. You have considered the most important knowledge you want pupils to learn. You have adapted the curriculum to meet the needs of a variety of pupils well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. You understand that this new curriculum will take time to embed across the school. You have identified how you will monitor the impact of your work in the short and long term.

Governors now have a strong understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. They understand the information you provide them with and ask relevant questions to challenge and support school improvement. The governing body members appreciate the open and honest relationship you have with them. They feel empowered to help bring about necessary improvements at the school.

You have established a new behaviour policy. Pupils and staff understand this policy well. Pupils say that behaviour is managed well in their lessons. Pupils value the rewards that are on offer. Your observations of behaviour around the school are that it is a calm and purposeful environment for pupils to learn in. Inspectors agree. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong.

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

Yours sincerely,

John Linkins
His Majesty's Inspector