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5 November 2010

Mrs Gillian Zsapka
Headteacher
Heygarth Primary School
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Dear Mrs Zsapka

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Heygarth Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 November 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the governors, parents and carers, pupils and representatives of the local authority to whom I spoke during the day.

Since the inspection in March 2010, a new private provider of before-and after-school childcare, Kids United, has been appointed by the governing body. Several teachers have changed classes and are teaching pupils of different ages from those they taught in March.

As a result of the inspection on 23 and 24 March 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

There has been a substantial improvement in pupils' achievement in English. The results of the national end of Key Stage 2 tests for 2010 were very positive, a significant improvement over the levels reached by pupils in 2009, with nearly nine out of every ten pupils attaining the nationally expected level for 11 year-olds, and a half of pupils attaining the higher level, Level 5. End of key stage results for mathematics are less positive than in English for 7 and 11 year-olds, especially in the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher levels for their age. However, over eight out of every ten pupils achieved the national expectation in mathematics in the 2010 national tests for 11 year-olds, which is around the average expected nationally.

Pupils are making much better progress. Many children entering school continue to have problems with language and communication and have weaker social skills and levels of emotional development than those expected for their age. By the end of Year 2, pupils' standards are broadly in line with those of other pupils at seven years. The overall picture of achievement is, therefore, significantly better than that reported in the March inspection, when outcomes were judged inadequate. Pupils say they enjoy their work and this was clearly evident in the lessons observed during the inspection. Pupils tackled writing tasks with enthusiasm and used their knowledge of numbers well in lessons other than those in mathematics. Behaviour is now consistently good. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are proud of the progress they are making in managing their behaviour.

The procedures to monitor and evaluate the progress pupils make are much improved in all respects. The headteacher and deputy headteacher rigorously check on the progress of each class and pupils and hold interviews to discuss pupils' progress with each teacher. The information they analyse is provided by teachers who are confident in assessing pupils' stages of learning. Teachers use this information to plan work that is appropriately challenging and which is shared with pupils to set individual targets for improvement. During the visit, older pupils in particular were fully aware of the levels at which they were working and described what they needed to do to achieve the next level. Procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, with a view to make it more effective and for teachers to learn from good practice, are now well developed. In some respects, the monitoring of teaching and learning are now exemplary, as in the degree to which the governing body is involved in the process, and also in the extent that monitoring is undertaken by all teachers. This is leading to a more open ethos in the school, where discussion about making teaching more effective is common.

The quality of teaching observed during the visit was never less than good and some outstanding teaching was seen. This was considerably better than that seen during the inspection in March and exceeds the target set for the school to achieve by the inspection team in their areas for improvement. The local authority came to similar conclusions about the quality of teaching during its latest review of the work of the school. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, particularly within English lessons, although the pace of lessons fell a little during the afternoon sessions. More use is made of information communication technology: teachers made use of interactive whiteboards and/or laptops during each of the lessons observed. The lesson planning seen was of much better quality with clear objectives for learning. Pupils were given well-defined criteria that they could measure their work against, to check they had learned what was intended.

The school's strengths recorded in the March inspection, such as the care, guidance and support for pupils have been maintained. Parents and carers and those governors who are parents spoke warmly of their appreciation of the dedication of staff and of the quality of the partnership between parents and carers and the school.

The local authority's statement of action outlining its planned support for the school met requirements, except that it did not state how the views of parents and carers would be sought and acted upon. The school and local authority remedied this omission by holding a meeting with parents and carers in June. The requirements for the statement of action are now met. The local authority has provided support of good quality for the school, brokered by the School Improvement Partner/Contact Officer. The local authority has provided a good balance between support, through its advisers and consultants, and an appropriate level of challenge and accountability. School reviews by the local authority have provided important milestones against which the school has measured its improvement.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010

- Improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that:
 - more activities are provided to increase pupils' eagerness to write in all subjects
 - pupils have more opportunities to improve their skills in speaking
 - there are regular opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in a range of contexts
 - pupils have plentiful opportunities to discuss their tasks and then record their work independently.
- By 31 December 2010, increase the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation procedures by ensuring that:
 - there is a clear cycle of arrangements to check rigorously all aspects of the school's work
 - outcomes are clearly recorded, weaknesses addressed rapidly and clearly linked to the school's improvement planning.
- By 31 December 2010, improve the quality of teaching so that 75% is good or better by ensuring that:
 - all teachers know the levels at which pupils should be working and precisely tailor tasks to pupils' needs and abilities, in particular the more-able
 - more consistent use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and use questioning that challenges pupils to think deeply about their learning
 - the conclusions of lessons are used to establish what pupils have learnt.