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28 November 2012

Miss H Cooper
Headteacher
Barnes Junior School
Mount Road
Barnes
Sunderland
SR4 7QF

Dear Miss Cooper

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Barnes Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 28 November 2012 with Susan Brown HMI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher; the subject leaders for mathematics and English; the Chair of the Governing Body and with a representative of the local authority. During the visit, the inspector evaluated the school's improvement plans and looked at their data on pupils' progress and monitoring data on teaching and learning.

Context

Since the inspection, one member of staff is on long-term compassionate leave. The English subject leader is about to go on maternity leave and her post will be covered by one of the senior leaders.

Main findings

There are currently two separate plans in place to improve the school: a post-inspection action plan and a school improvement plan. The plans identify some specific actions for improvement with identified timescales when action should be completed. However, they lack any link between actions and the impact they will have on improving pupils' progress to good or better. It is not as clear as it should be how senior leaders and the governing body will be able to measure the success of the plans each term.

Governors are kept well informed by senior leaders and they are ambitious for the school. However, they do not always have the information they need to challenge senior leaders or hold them to account. The Chair of the Governing Body is aware of this gap and the need for the governors to receive more training so that they can improve this aspect of their work.

Senior leaders have begun to put systems in place to improve pupils' knowledge of the levels they are working at but these are based on frequent testing and teachers are not yet using the information they gather about individual pupils to move learning forward in lessons. Also the monitoring of teaching and learning does not yet have a clear focus on how pupils learn in lessons so that teachers can be held to account when progress is less than expected.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that she visits the school again and that further action is taken to:

- combine the two separate plans into one high-quality plan that makes clear links between school actions and the impact actions will have on improving pupils' progress, so that governors and senior leaders are able to easily measure the success of actions each term
- seek training from the local authority for governors so that they can better understand data and use it to hold senior leaders to account
- form a partnership with a successful school to further develop teachers' understanding of assessment so that they can move away from termly testing of pupils and use this information to improve teaching and learning.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has chosen not to make use of the local authority support available to them and has brokered the services of an external consultant. This support has not been sufficiently focused on helping senior leaders identify the areas of weakness within the school, nor did it focus successfully on actions for improvement. There will soon be additional support from

local authority personnel to help the school identify a partnership school and for governing body training.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Sunderland and as below.

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.