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10 December 2012

Alexander Clark
Headteacher
High Halstow Primary School
Harrison Drive
High Halstow
Rochester
Kent
ME3 8TF

Dear Mr Clark

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to High Halstow Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 December 2012, 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the interim executive headteacher, the acting head of school and middle leaders as well as the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives of the Williamson Trust. The school development plans were evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including records of monitoring of the quality of teaching and analysis of pupils' progress. The interim executive headteacher and acting head of school took the HMI on a tour of the school to look at specific improvements to teaching and learning and classroom environments since the last inspection.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staffing or the school organisation since the recent inspection.

Main findings

The school improvement plan, which was written just prior to the inspection of October 2012, is strongly focused on the areas for improvement identified by accurate self-evaluation. Priorities correspond precisely with the areas identified as requiring improvement by the inspection. The plan is succinct and clearly focused on improving pupils' achievement through further raising the quality of teaching, improving the quality and use of data and strengthening leadership. Roles and responsibilities are clearly identified, time-frames are explicit and the role of the Governing Body in monitoring and evaluating progress is clear.

Teachers have a better understanding of their own responsibilities for raising pupils' achievement. All staff spoken to during this visit talked of 'increased expectations' upon both staff and pupils. This expectation is reflected in a series of shared 'non-negotiables' such as improvements to the classroom environment as well as staff training which is followed up by rigorous monitoring. All staff now have performance management targets relating to pupils' progress.

With clearer communication between senior staff and the governing body, governors hold a more precise view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The Chair of the Governing Body has benefitted from a high quality mentoring programme and as a result is more knowledgeable and confident in leading the way and in holding school leaders to account. Parents and carers are also now better informed and a parent forum has recently been established.

Senior leaders, governors and the academy trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that action is taken to:

- complete any further restructuring of leadership as swiftly as possible, in order that all staff are clear about leadership responsibilities into the future
- ensure all governors play a clear role in driving school improvement.

External support

The range of high quality and individualised nature of support provided to senior and middle leaders, class teachers and governors from partners within the Williamson Trust has been central in securing rapid improvement. Those responsible for leading literacy and numeracy have worked with the support of experienced and successful subject leaders in partner schools. These subject leaders are now taking a specific role in school improvement including carrying out lesson observations and workbook scrutinies. Other teachers have taken part in programmes to raise the quality of teaching and are now sharing this learning with colleagues through professional development meetings.

The school has a contractual agreement with the local authority and some support, including training for governors, comes via this route.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the chief executive of the Williamson Trust and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector