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Mrs Catherine Clayton-Young
Headteacher
Griffin Park Primary School
Cavendish Place
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB2 2PN

Dear Mrs Clayton-Young

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

Following my visit, with Lee Northern Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 6 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 headteacher, other senior leaders, five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and members of the school pupil council. The school improvement plan was evaluated and the school's recent monitoring records were considered.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the recent inspection which judged the school to require improvement.

Main findings

The school improvement plan has been revised and has a strong focus on securing pupils' rapid progress and closing gaps between those pupils who are eligible for pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government) and their peers. The areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection have been addressed by suitably planned actions with agreed timescales, success criteria and monitoring arrangements.

The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have been redefined. There are clear lines of accountability and communication so that the school's key improvement priorities can be led, monitored and evaluated in an efficient way that is understood by everyone involved. There is a sense of shared purpose and ambition among leaders and teachers. Feedback to teachers following the headteacher's monitoring of their lesson planning is leading to greater consistency in the school's approach to establishing clear objectives for all lessons, ensuring the purposefulness of activities and raising expectations of what different groups of children can achieve. The Teachers' Standards have been introduced to staff but are not yet used to underpin monitoring.

The school has invested significantly in a programme to improve children's reading and writing. Staff have received training and observed good practice in a school in a neighbouring local authority. The literacy leader is providing strong direction to ensure that the programme is implemented consistently in school and that its impact on children's achievement is regularly measured. Additional time has been allocated for the teaching of literacy and careful planning is being undertaken to ensure that pupils have memorable and interesting experiences that encourage them to enjoy reading and writing. The mathematics leader is aware of strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and has a clear plan for how it should be improved. Pupils know that their teachers are working hard to make lessons more enjoyable. They say that they like activities that are fun, including through using equipment and working outdoors on real problems and sharing ideas with their partners in lessons.

Senior leaders are monitoring teachers' marking carefully. Pupils say that they can see that the feedback they receive is increasingly helpful, for instance through the use of detailed comments in green pen that show them how to make their work better.

The school is in the early stages of partnership working with a good school in the local authority. It is intended that this will provide senior leaders with opportunities to develop their skills, but a detailed plan for this work, including success criteria, has not yet been formalised.

The school's governors are well-informed about the school's work and have scheduled their meetings to focus on the school's priorities. Links have been established with classes so that governors, including those who are new to their roles, have accurate insight. The local authority has provided the Governing Body with a suitably rigorous framework for monitoring the schools progress and holding leaders to account; this includes consideration of data relating to pupils' progress that will underpin decision-making about teachers' pay.

Senior leaders and governors 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 further action is taken to:

- ensure that work undertaken with the partner school is defined by clear success criteria
- maintain a strong focus on monitoring the work of the school, including through using Teachers' Standards as the basis of evaluation and performance management
- provide professional development for governors through links with the partner school.

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

External support

The local authority knows the school well and provides it with effective support. This has included the support of a consultant who has helped key stage leaders to develop effective ways of working. The local authority has also brokered support from a partner school to assist in the development of self-evaluation and improvements in the quality of mathematics teaching. A school improvement officer monitors the school's progress accurately and regularly.

In addition the headteacher has commissioned support from an Early Years Foundation Stage consultant and has established the link with a school whose practice in reading and writing is of high quality. This link is helping staff to understand how the teaching of phonics can effectively be developed.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Blackburn with Darwen.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall

Her Majesty's Inspector