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18 January 2013

Headteacher
Mark Wilkes
Highfields Primary School
Elder Lane
Burntwood
WS7 9BT

Dear Mr Wilkes

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

Following my visit to your school on 17 January 2013, 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 November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and a consultant headteacher who has been commissioned by the local authority to work with the school while it requires improvement. The inspector also met with three members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a senior manager of the local authority's school improvement division. The school development plan was evaluated. The inspector and senior leadership team also visited all classes during the morning and spoke to some pupils and staff.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staffing since the school's inspection in November 2012.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have started to address the most urgent areas for improvement through more systematic observations of teaching and pupils' work. The school's development plan rightly focuses on improving the proportion of good teaching and raising pupils' achievement. The governing body has recently formed a 'standards committee' which is stepping up the level of scrutiny it undertakes. Recent training for governors on the use of pupil performance data has improved their capacity to hold leaders and teachers to account and, together with senior leaders, they are increasingly checking on pupils' progress. The school development plan sets out some well-devised measures of success from which leaders and governors can gauge how well the teaching is improving. However, there is not enough detail in the school's development plan that refers specifically to pupils' progress and their learning targets in writing and mathematics. This makes it difficult for leaders to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. Teachers are benefiting from the expertise of an effective consultant headteacher who arranges for them to observe good or outstanding teaching at another school and share best practice.

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 further action is taken to:

- include in the school development plan more specific targets that refer to pupils' attainment and progress in writing and mathematics
- make sure that judgements about the quality of teaching always take account of the impact that the teaching is having on pupils' progress.

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

External support

The local authority is providing effective light touch support for the school. The headteacher is also using the services of consultants and advisers as part of teachers' professional development. The partnership arrangement with a consultant headteacher is providing greater clarity for teachers about what constitutes good and outstanding teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire local authority.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector