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Mrs Rachael Bentham
Headteacher
Woodhouses Voluntary Primary School
Ashton Road
Woodhouses
Failsworth
Manchester
M35 9WL

Dear Mrs Bentham

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Woodhouses Voluntary 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, a class teacher, a governor and a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated, along with the headteacher's records of recent lesson observations. Short visits were made to all classes.

Context

The headteacher at the time of the Section 5 inspection left the school to take up a new post in December 2012. A new headteacher took up post on January 1 2013.

Main findings

The new headteacher and previous headteacher worked closely together to prepare an action plan in response to the section 5 inspection. This enabled the new headteacher to quickly establish a detailed understanding of the school's context. She has lost no time in identifying the school's priorities and deciding strategies to bring about change. The school's action plan is clearly presented and appropriately detailed; it includes intended actions, responsible personnel, timescales and monitoring arrangements. The action plan is regularly checked, presented to governors and amended where necessary. Staff have debated the findings of the inspection and have been consulted on how pupils' progress can be accelerated, especially in mathematics where performance was found to be weaker than in English. Staff have high morale, are committed to the school's improvement and supportive of the headteacher's approach, which was described by one teacher as 'rigorous but fair.' The findings of the inspection have also been discussed in detail with parents.

The headteacher has renewed the school's vision. She understands how the curriculum can be made more vibrant and exciting to build on the effective work already undertaken to establish the characteristics of the 'Woodhouse Learner'. She has introduced a systematic, rigorous system for monitoring the school's work. Teachers are provided with precise, constructive feedback on their planning, teaching and marking that enables them to reflect on what works well and make appropriate amendments. The headteacher also has clear plans to improve the quality of homework, and classroom display.

There is a strong drive in school to improve the quality teaching, particularly in mathematics, in order that all pupils achieve challenging personal targets.

During the monitoring inspection, pupils of all ages enjoyed whole school mathematics challenge activities that provided them with a range of opportunities to apply mathematical skills. The teaching of mathematics has been given greater prominence through increased teaching time, a shared staff focus on how skills are developed, the introduction of a maths club and the involvement of parents in mathematical activities they share with their children. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are carefully recorded. A productive link has been established, through a governor, with an outstanding primary school where there is excellent mathematics teaching. Visits are planned in order that all class teachers have opportunities to observe and discuss the partner school's work.

The headteacher plans to work with the teacher responsible for special educational needs teaching and local authority staff to ensure that the best possible targeted support is provided for those pupils who require additional help with mathematics.

The school's governors receive detailed information about pupils' performance. They are actively involved in the life of the school and committed to its development. They will receive some additional support from the diocese to ensure that they are able to ask challenging questions of the school's leaders.

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 the views of pupils are sought in evaluating the impact of initiatives to improve teaching and learning.
- review the effectiveness of mathematics teaching for those pupils who have special educational needs or make less progress than their peers.

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

External support

A range of effective, complementary support is provided to the school including from the local authority, who have made additional time available from a school performance adviser. Mentor support for the new headteacher is provided through Oldham's Leadership Alliance, which is a consortium of headteachers, and from Manchester diocese. School –to- school support facilitated by a governor is having a strong impact on the development of mathematics teaching. The local cluster of schools, including the nearby high school, is a valuable support network, for instance enabling the sharing of resources to improve information technology to accelerate learning.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children, Young People and Families' Services for Oldham and the Director of Education for Manchester Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector