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5 February 2013

Mr B Aspell
The Meadows School
School Road
High Wycombe
HP10 0HF

Dear Mr Aspell

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to The Meadows School

Following my visit to your school on 4 February 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated and the inspector looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work.

Context

Since the inspection, two new part-time teachers have been employed to enable teachers with leadership responsibilities to complete their roles or to deliver one-to-one support for pupils identified as underachieving. A new scheme has been introduced to support the teaching and learning of information and communications technology (ICT). The procedures to manage teachers' performance have been strengthened and include specific targets related to pupils' outcomes.

Main findings

Leaders have responded positively to the report. A new action plan has been produced quickly, which focuses firmly on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, improving pupils' outcomes and other school priorities identified for development. The plan includes clear aims, actions and criteria to measure success in the long term. It does not include enough specific and measurable milestones throughout the year to evaluate the progress achieved and monitor the impact of improvement priorities. Work started prior to the inspection has been strengthened and in some cases brought forward, particularly for mathematics and ICT. This has resulted in extra training in how to teach mathematics for teachers and a new scheme of work for ICT being introduced.

Good emphasis has been given to professional training for teachers and teaching assistants through training days, staff meetings and more opportunities to share effective practice across the school. The headteacher has been pro-active in creating links with another local school through a 'teaching school alliance' to extend opportunities for staff to observe, plan and teach jointly with other expert teachers. Teachers spoken to are very positive about the changes that have occurred over the last year and say these have accelerated further since inspection. They say they know the vision and direction of the school more clearly, what they are all aiming to achieve and everyone shares in the successes achieved so far.

A number of whole-school policies have been reviewed and agreed with staff since the inspection. Senior leaders have produced a comprehensive programme of monitoring and evaluation activities that focuses well on the consistent implementation and use of training and new initiatives. For example, the new ways of providing written feedback to pupils through marking has been monitored, which has resulted in pupils receiving higher quality commentary than previously. Teachers receive specific and precise individual feedback following observations of their work to help to improve the quality of teaching and learning further. Middle leaders have also benefited from training and working with senior leaders and/or local authority consultants to develop their roles and responsibilities. As a result, they are playing a bigger role in developing and monitoring their areas of responsibility.

Senior leaders have strengthened the focus on pupils' learning. They have increased the number of meetings with teachers to six a year. This is proving to be a successful strategy to hold teachers to account for pupil progress. Secure procedures are in place to intervene and support any pupils identified as falling behind their targets or not making as much progress as expected. Assessment information indicates that pupils are maintaining the higher standards and improved rate of progress seen by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2012.

Governors play an active role in monitoring and evaluating the school's work. They demonstrate a clear understanding of pupils' achievements and know how this relates to the national picture. The Chair of the Governing Body has a good

understanding and knowledge of procedures to manage the performance of staff. He recognises that questions on teachers' performance and its impact on pupils' outcomes could be more robust and should be linked more carefully to the award of pay increases.

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:

- include specific and measurable milestones in the action plan to support the evaluation and tracking of progress and improvements
- ensure governors ask more robust questions on teachers' performance and pay and relate their decisions more closely to pupils' outcomes
- send summary information on the latest assessments for phonics, reading and writing to the HMI.

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

External support

The local authority has provided effective support, including the production of a statement of action linked to the areas of improvement identified at the last inspection. This has identified additional time from the school improvement adviser and school improvement consultant for mathematics to support the school in the short term. These external consultants have completed a moderation exercise of pupils' work and carried out mentoring activities with staff to develop and improve the use of pupil assessment information and data. The headteacher has the confidence of the local authority to continue the momentum of improvements started before the inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Judith Rundle
Her Majesty's Inspector