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Peter Johnston
Executive Headteacher
Carsington and Hopton Primary School
Carsington
Matlock
Derbyshire
DE4 4DE

Dear Mr Johnston

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

Following my visit to your school on 07 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 November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and a link advisor from the local authority. A tour of the school was undertaken with the executive headteacher. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A sample of pupils' work, the school's own monitoring files, and documentation related to the performance of staff were scrutinised.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the section 5 inspection which judged the school to require improvement.

Main findings

The school improvement plan has been revised in accordance with how schools are judged by Ofsted and following the findings of the last school inspection. There are specific objectives, named persons with responsibility for driving the necessary improvement and timescales. The school is under no illusion that the pace of improvement needs to be rapid and is dependent on all staff and governors working closely as a team. The focus of the executive headteacher has been appropriate and new systems and structures for monitoring, which now include governors, are workable. There has been some analysis of the progress of groups of pupils in school, and the careful planning required for classes. This is not yet finely tuned enough to ensure the good progress of every year group. Assessment data is not secure as pupils' work is not consistently accurately matched against National Curriculum levels and staff are overly reliant on pupils undertaking optional test papers termly. This is improving as staff work with the executive headteacher who is promoting the necessity to assess pupils regularly and accurately and to ensure that work in lessons is more closely matched to pupils' emerging needs. Training for staff in assessing pupils' progress throughout lessons is planned. Additional support for staff from another similar primary school with which the school now collaborates is proving useful. The school has begun to share some of the good practice that exists across both key stages, but expectations are still not as high as they should be for all pupils and there is variability in the quality of marking pupils' work. Scrutiny of literacy books revealed there is too much variability in presentation and handwriting styles and that pupils are not always responding to teachers' marking or completing sufficient work. Staff are not yet sufficiently held to account for the progress of all pupils in their class.

The governing body is strengthening. It is starting to take decisive action and governors are committed to increasing the level of challenge they give to the school. They recognise that, as a body, they require further training to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil this. The executive headteacher and the local authority are able to assist with training which is to be closely aligned to the school's needs and the work outlined on its improvement plan. New governor committees have been established to sharpen the focus of their monitoring, including for school visits. Governors are improving their understanding of their responsibilities in checking the assessment of pupils' progress and standards, the quality of teaching and the leadership and management of the school. However, there are some omissions in their checking of the school's work which require urgent action, for example, the necessity to improve their monitoring of the performance of staff and to check that the statutory requirements of the governing body, for the school and for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are fulfilled.

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:

- ensure that good teaching practice is more effectively shared across the school, including planning work to meet each pupils' needs, precise marking of pupils' work, and expectations for all pupils' writing in lessons
- ensure that teacher assessment is consistently accurate and is used effectively for setting pupils' targets, planning for high levels of challenge, determining those pupils who require additional support to succeed and to ensure all pupils reach the standards of which they are capable
- further train governors to ensure they all fully understand their statutory responsibilities and their role in monitoring school improvement
- establish a robust system of performance management which ensures that all teaching at the school is consistently good or better and that all staff are held to account for the progress and achievement of every pupil in their class
- schedule another visit to the school by HMI to monitor progress.

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

External support

The school is drawing well on the support provided by the local authority and the collaboration with another local primary school. This is working effectively to help senior leaders and governors to drive improvement and develop consistency across every year group. The local authority is also working with the Governing Body and school leaders to help plan for developing a sustainable leadership and organisational model for the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Derbyshire Diocese and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector