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8 February 2013

Christine Marshall
Headteacher
North Borough Junior School
Peel Street
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 2BP

Dear Mrs Marshall

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to North Borough Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 8 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 headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement and post inspection action plans were evaluated and the inspector also looked at other documents provided by the school, such as monitoring records, minutes of Governing Body meetings and the most recent checks on pupils' achievement.

Context

Since the inspection in November, a Year 3 teacher has left the school. The acting chair of the Governing Body has become the substantive chair and there is a new vice chair.

Main findings

Senior leaders had already identified the areas requiring improvement which were included in the inspection report and so have had to tweak, rather than rewrite, their school improvement plan. The planned actions are appropriate and some of the criteria for evaluating success are specific and measurable. It is not clear, however, how, when or by whom, the plan will be monitored or success evaluated.

Nonetheless, the headteacher provides detailed termly evaluations against the plan and these show evidence that progress is being measured against termly expectations. This is particularly the case regarding pupil's achievement in mathematics, reading and writing. The evidence provided for governors is very detailed and informative, however, some success criteria are not easily measured and this makes it difficult for staff and governors to judge whether actions have had the desired impact.

The senior leaders have rigorously and successfully addressed the most serious incidence of inadequate teaching. The focus on improving pupils' achievement in reading and writing has intensified. Several initiatives have been introduced and the impact of these is being monitored carefully. Training has already taken place to improve the quality of teaching, the effectiveness of monitoring and the work of teaching assistants. The school has carried out activities to enhance teachers' understanding of the different levels of achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has carefully analysed the progress of different groups and have discussed with the pupils why they believe they make better progress in some subjects than in others. The curriculum has been amended to provide more interesting and relevant opportunities for writing and the school has noticed a marked improvement in the achievement of some pupils as a result. There has been less focus on ensuring that more able pupils are being sufficiently challenged in all lessons.

Governors are aware that their small numbers and difficulty in recruiting new governors is inhibiting their impact. The records of the governing body provide little evidence of scrutiny and challenge. Things have moved forward since the inspection, however, and a substantive chair and vice chair are now in post. Committees have been restructured to better focus on and meet the needs of the school.

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:

- improve the school improvement plan's success criteria and involve governors more in shaping the school's vision of what good progress and success will look like

- work with the local authority and other local schools to provide training for governors.

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

External support

The local authority has provided a significant amount of training and support. The school has taken this on well and, despite considerable changeover of staff, there has been improvement, particularly in the quality and impact of leadership. The local authority will continue to provide support through termly monitoring and evaluation meetings and also through facilitating collaboration between local schools. The school is active in this consortium and is benefiting through sharing experiences and expertise.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector