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8 February 2013

Mrs Alison Seaton
Coppice Primary School
Roper Avenue
Heanor
DE75 7BZ

Dear Mrs Seaton

Requires improvement monitoring inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Coppice Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 08 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on my findings. 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 December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The inspector analysed a range of management documents, including those relating to school self-evaluation, development planning and the improvement of teaching. Brief visits were made to each class.

Context

The school has recently advertised for a permanent headteacher.

Main findings

Improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement started in September 2012 when a temporary acting headteacher was appointed from another school and the senior leadership team became stable for the first time in three years. Senior leaders quickly identified key weaknesses and drew up a sharply focused plan to tackle

them. This plan was agreed with the local authority and it weaved in their support. The high quality of this improvement plan was acknowledged by the inspection team and it is contributing to a rapid pace of improvement. The quality of teaching is improving because senior leaders systematically identify each teacher's strengths and weaknesses and provide coaching closely matched to their needs. Lesson plans are scrutinised to ensure they provide the correct level of challenge for all groups of pupils. Each teacher has an extensive set of prompts to help them ask questions that make pupils think hard and answer with full explanations. Very clear guidance is improving the teaching of writing skills and the feedback given to pupils when their work is marked. As a result of improvements to the curriculum, pupils are more motivated to write because their work is linked to interesting topics. This is helping them to improve their skills in writing at length and varying the style for different audiences. Senior leaders have changed the organisation of subject leadership responsibilities so that they are better matched to teachers' strengths and more experienced leaders can support those new to a post.

During the last three years, the Governing Body has been pre-occupied with issues relating to turbulence in school leadership. Following the inspection, and with the help of local authority training, they have re-focused their work on evaluating pupils' achievement and ensuring school leaders are doing everything possible to improve it. Records of recent meetings show they are now asking very searching questions about why some groups are under-achieving and whether support programmes are helping them to make up lost ground.

Senior leaders and the Governing Body are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority identified concerns before the inspection and, in partnership with the Governing Body, they strengthened the senior leadership team with the appointment of a temporary acting headteacher who has a successful track record of improving schools. Their support for the new leadership team in improving teaching is effective, particularly because it is integrated into the school improvement plan. While contributing strongly to improvements in classroom practice, it is also building subject leaders' capacity to carry on this work independently.

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

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector