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Mrs Kirsty Cooper
Acting Headteacher
Grayrigg CofE School
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LA8 9BU

Dear Mrs Cooper

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Grayrigg CofE School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 27 February 2013, and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the governors, the headteacher of your partner school and the local authority adviser for taking the time to meet with me during my visit. My thanks must also go to the pupils for being so polite and helpful when I met and spoke with them.

Since the last section 5 inspection the Key Stage 2 teacher has taken on the role of acting headteacher while the permanent headteacher is absent. Two teachers have been appointed; one to teach the Key Stage 1 and Reception class and one to teach the Key Stage 2 class in the afternoons, when the permanent Key Stage 2 teacher is fulfilling her acting headship duties. In addition, a new teaching assistant has been appointed. Since July 2012 the school has been supported by a national leader in education, who is the headteacher at a partner school.

As a result of the inspection on 19 June 2012, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Following the last inspection a national leader in education was assigned to work with the school. With her support, action plans for school improvement were drawn up. However, the school was slow to get going at putting these plans into action. More recently, under the leadership of the acting headteacher, these plans have been implemented and, since Christmas, the pace of change has accelerated.

Routines for checking the effectiveness of the school's work and for providing guidance, feedback and training to help staff are now in place. All staff know what the school needs to do to improve and there is a strong sense of team work and shared purpose that has lifted



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

morale. It is still early days, but staff in new roles are keen to learn and are receptive and responsive to advice.

A close working relationship with the partner school is supporting leaders in developing their skills and is helping all staff to learn from good practice. The acting headteacher has initiated a programme of monitoring in order to check the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. Her judgement is sound, as is her understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning. As she is new to this role, the quality of her feedback and guidance that she gives to staff is not as sharp and focused as it could be.

Staff at all levels now understand what is expected from them and have more of a voice in agreeing school policy and shaping the direction of the school. Parents and governors also say that they are now more involved in decision making because the procedures for consultation and sharing information have improved. The Key Stage 1 and Reception class teacher appointed in September 2012, and currently acting as Early Years Foundation Stage leader, is already proving to be effective in her role.

Parents say that, while their children have always been happy at Grayrigg School, the quality of communication between home and school has improved. They now feel more informed about their children's progress and school life. The school has organised curriculum information events and now does more to seek and respond to parents' views.

Governors are doing their job better than they used to. This is because they now have the information they need in order to understand how well the school is doing and to ask questions. They have become actively involved in improvement planning and in setting the direction for the school's future. In addition, they have simplified their committee structures in order to be more open in their work, so that all are informed.

During this monitoring visit good teaching was seen in both classes. Work is marked regularly and, in the main, this offers helpful feedback and guidance to pupils about how to improve their work and prompts them to respond.

Pupils' handwriting and presentation of work in books are still variable. Even allowing for the wide age range in each class there is still too much careless work.

The whole-school focus on writing, and its link with recently improved target setting, provides pupils with regular opportunities to check their own and each other's work. This is helping them to develop evaluative attitudes and has boosted their confidence. Older pupils are able to explain how this is helping them to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next in order to reach higher levels of attainment. Across the school, and in different subjects, all pupils are now being given more time and opportunity to write at length and for meaningful purposes. Whether they are writing to a children's author or using drama as a stimulus for writing speech pupils respond with enthusiasm.



The curriculum is being modified to make it more relevant to the pupils' interests and needs. This is promoting greater independence in learning and a more creative use of learning environments, both indoors and outside, for pupils of all ages.

The teaching of letters and letter sounds (phonics) and other key literacy skills is given a high priority. Teachers and teaching assistants lead daily, small group sessions that focus on basic skills. These short, sharp, and often fun, early morning activities are helping to equip pupils with the skills they need.

The very small numbers of pupils in each year make year-to-year comparisons of limited value because the attainment of one pupil can make a big difference to the overall statistics. However, while pupils are not making the rapid progress in their early literacy necessary to make up for any slower progress in the past, their progress in learning their letter sounds is faster than it used to be.

The local authority supports the school well. Its statement of action is fit for purpose. It identifies courses of action, timescales for monitoring and clear success criteria. Regular update reports show how all involved with school leadership, including the diocese, are now keeping a much closer eye on how well the school is doing. The support from the headteacher and staff at the partner school has also brought benefits.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mr Martin Pye
Lead Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2012

- Improve leadership and management at all levels, within the next six months, by:
 - developing systematic approaches to monitoring, performance management and school improvement planning and regularly reviewing the impact of actions
 - engaging effectively with parents and carers so that all feel well informed about their children's progress and the school's achievements
 - developing leadership roles across the school, particularly in relation to leading on key improvement issues
 - strengthening the role of the governing body in communicating with parents and carers and in evaluating the progress of the school.

- Ensure consistently good teaching so that all groups of pupils make good progress by:
 - consistently applying policies for assessment, marking and presentation of work so that pupils know what they have to do to improve
 - ensuring that targets for improvement are clear and pupils have opportunities to respond to feedback and marking
 - broadening the range of writing experiences for pupils at Key Stage 1
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to use and apply key skills across all subjects at all key stages.

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children make good progress across all areas of learning by:
 - making sure activities that children take part in independently in and out of doors provide sufficient challenge and interest to extend their knowledge and skills
 - ensuring that the teaching of new knowledge and skills, including that of sounds and letters (phonics), progresses at a rapid pace.

