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14 March 2013

Mr Martin Davies
Headteacher
Blackmoor Park Junior School
Leyfield Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L12 9HB

Dear Mr Davies

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

Following my visit to your school on 13 March 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 December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with yourself, other senior leaders, the governing body, a representative of the local authority and pupils. The school's action plan was evaluated. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the local authority's report on the school's actions to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. I also looked at a sample of pupils' work and considered letters received from parents and carers about improvements they had noticed since the inspection.

Context

Since the previous inspection a new subject leader for mathematics has been appointed and an additional teacher has been employed to work closely with more able pupils in Year 6.

Main findings

The governing body and senior leaders feel very strongly that the previous inspection came as a 'wake up call'. Governors have challenged the school to tackle the complacency that had existed in some quarters. They have sent out a very clear message to teaching staff that they will not be content until Blackmoor Park becomes, at the very least, a good school.

School leaders have swiftly put in place a thorough and sharply focused action plan to turn the school around. This plan, while still requiring some refinement, is clear, straightforward and well-targeted at the correct issues.

Year group leaders have welcomed their new role in holding classroom teachers to account for pupils' progress. The recently appointed subject leader for mathematics is enthusiastic and determined to drive improvements in how the subject is taught. This strengthening of the role of middle leaders, in combination with much more challenging targets for improvement is starting to have an impact on increasing the rate at which pupils make progress.

Teaching has improved since the previous inspection, and this has been noted in reports written by the local authority following joint lesson observations with members of the senior leadership team. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated through coaching, staff training and sending teachers to observe good practice in this school and in others. There is a higher proportion of good and better lessons. Pupils have noticed that 'lessons are harder' but that 'teachers explain more'. As one pupil put it: 'instead of teachers talking and telling us what to do, now they give us questions which we need to figure out for ourselves – when you're involved it's more fun and you learn more'.

The marking policy is now consistently applied and again this is appreciated by pupils and parents alike. One pupil commented: 'We have better feedback – we can check if we have met our targets, and now we know that teachers have read our work'. A parent also was impressed with improvements and wrote: 'My son loves the two way marking conversation in his books with his teacher. This is a great idea – wish I'd had it when I was at school!'

Governors are well aware that previously the rate at which pupils made progress was not good enough. They are determined to make sure that the school 'raises its game'. In response to the previous inspection, the governing body quickly formed a 'Governors' Action Committee' that holds the school firmly to account. This has introduced a strong vein of urgency in tackling the areas for improvement. Governors now check pupils' books and Year group leaders have to report at regular intervals to the governing body on pupils' progress. The governing body has used its power to refuse pay increases to staff who have not met their targets.

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:

- increase the intensity and regularity of checking up on pupils' progress so that action can be taken even more rapidly to stop pupils underachieving
- strengthen further the role of the mathematics subject leader so that she can better support classroom teachers in helping pupils to make better progress
- increase school targets further so that they are in line with or higher than the national average for expected levels of progress
- continue to improve the quality of teaching by checking to make sure that staff training is applied consistently and routinely in the classroom, so that delivering good lessons becomes the norm for all teachers
- maintain a watchful eye on the progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium to make sure that the gap between the achievement of these pupils and that of other pupils in the school grows narrower

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

External support

The school draws well on local authority support. An intensive programme has been immediately implemented and this is already having a positive effect, for example in improving the quality of teaching. Termly 'Challenge Board' meetings hold the school to account and the school has the benefit of a highly skilled local authority representative. He knows the school well and can therefore provide support that is finely tailored to the specific needs of Blackmoor Park.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.