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Mr P Turner
Headteacher
Birchfield Primary School
Birchfield Avenue
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Leeds
LS27 7HU

Dear Mr Turner

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

Following my visit to your school on 15 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, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. Post-Ofsted action plans drawn up by the school leaders and the governing body were evaluated. Records of lesson observations and a sample of pupils' work were examined.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the inspection in December.

Main findings

Staff and governors were disappointed with the inspection outcome but are determined to make improvements. Leaders have started to adopt a more rigorous approach to managing the performance of staff and pupils. This is reflected in the post-Ofsted action plan which includes quantified performance indicators. The plan was drawn up immediately and leaders and governors have formally evaluated progress each month. The action plan for English should include the school targets for good progress in writing. Leaders report that staff meetings at all levels have become more formal with a tighter agenda and a stronger focus on pupil progress.

A common format for planning lessons has been introduced to make sure that teachers plan for different levels of ability more consistently and accurately. A common approach to marking has been introduced. Pupils were issued with new books in January to raise standards of presentation and the marking more clearly identifies how pupils can improve.

Teachers have visited other schools to learn from models of good or better teaching. The review of a support plan for a teacher shows that leaders have seen improvement. More frequent lesson observations, validated by external observers, also indicate improvement. The school reports that support for a middle leader has begun to improve subject leadership.

A new system for recording pupil progress is designed to extend the access and use of data to all teachers and to enable staff to take greater responsibility for pupil progress. Staff training will take place shortly. Leaders have set higher expectations for the amount of progress in each year. Teachers have held discussions with pupils to review their progress and their targets. Staff reviews of pupil progress take place more frequently.

Governors demonstrate a firm commitment to improving the management of performance. An action plan to improve the work of the governing body has begun to be implemented. The focus and records of governor visits have been sharpened. Governors have undertaken training in understanding data and have formulated questions to check on provision for different abilities. The Chair of Governors now receives the minutes of leaders' meetings and more frequent updates on pupil progress.

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:

- sustain the more rigorous approach to managing the performance of staff so that teaching continues to improve
- strengthen the analysis of pupils' progress to improve the planning of teaching and learning
- include targets in the English action plan against which to measure the rate of improvement in pupils' writing over time.

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

External support

The local authority provides regular support for monitoring and evaluation. The school is wisely planning to continue with this service. The school has well-established links with local schools which are being used to develop the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell

Her Majesty's Inspector