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17 April 2013

Mrs A Whiting
Blenheim Primary School and Nursery
Blenheim Road
Orpington
Kent
BR6 9BH

Dear Mrs Whiting

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Blenheim Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 17 April 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 senior leaders, teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

The headteacher and the inclusion manager, who is the acting deputy headteacher, will leave at the end of July 2013. A new headteacher has been appointed, and will start at the beginning of September. Since the previous inspection, four teachers have left. Replacements have been found, although most are temporary appointments. Less than half of the teaching staff are permanent appointments.

Main findings

The school's development plan focuses strongly on improving pupils' achievement. The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been incorporated well into school planning.

The most important priority for the school has been to improve teaching. This is being tackled in a concerted way, despite the significant staff turnover. An effective series of spot checks, book reviews and lesson observations have taken place. These measures have enabled senior leaders to gain a good picture of the quality of teaching and where more effort needs to be focused. This also enables leaders to give teaching staff, including teaching assistants, regular constructive feedback. As a result, the amount of good and outstanding teaching has risen considerably. Teachers are accountable for the progress their pupils make. Expectations about what pupils are capable of have been raised as a result of achievement being checked more closely.

The pupil progress meetings are contributing well to teachers' understanding of where there is underachievement. Swifter support is being given to those pupils who need it. Pupils' achievement in most year groups is rising. Work has been effective in improving classrooms, making them more interesting places for pupils to learn in. Good attention is being paid to improving vocabulary, which supports the school's focus on writing. Phase leaders are contributing well to school improvement, especially teaching and are fully accountable for their work.

While the school's development plans are adequately checked and progress is being made against the areas for improvement, senior leaders are not recording this progress, or what still needs to be undertaken.

Members of the governing body are supportive of school leaders. New members are sufficiently mentored to help them undertake their roles. A range of local authority training has been provided to improve their knowledge of what the governing body does. However, more training is needed to improve their understanding of how pupils' achievement is measured. Members of the governing body are not checking the impact of school leaders' actions regularly enough.

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, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- ensure that senior leaders identify and record the progress that has been made, against the actions to improve pupils' performance.
- ensure that members of the governing body make regular checks of the actions taken by senior leaders.

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

External support

The revised support arrangements by the local authority have resulted in the appointment of a new school improvement adviser for the school. The adviser is knowledgeable about the challenges school leaders face to improve pupils' achievement. Good support by the local authority has enabled school leaders to review the quality of teaching well. This support has also contributed to the implementation of a good system to assess pupils' learning more regularly. In addition to this, staff have been well supported to improve their planning and teaching of mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price
Her Majesty's Inspector