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Mrs Sarah Woods
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Woods

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Urmston Junior School, Trafford

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 February. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, three members of the governing body including the Chair and a group of pupils. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority. The school's development plan, the local authorities support and challenge plan, subject leaders' development plans and professional development records were also evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have been confirmed permanently in post.

Main findings

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have devised a development plan which provides a framework for improvement. This plan addresses all the key weaknesses identified in the last inspection. However, apart from governance, it is too generic and lacks the specific details of the actions that need to be taken to bring about rapid improvement in the classroom. Following a recent review, this has already been recognised and amendments are being made to provide more specific detail and to clarify individual responsibilities.

The momentum for improvement was started prior to the inspection and is being maintained. Pupils speak positively about the school and the changes they have noticed particularly in improving the negative atmosphere which permeated the school. In their words the new management team are beginning to make a difference 'for the better'. Lessons are, on the whole, 'much more fun' and 'teaching is getting better'. Teachers are now more 'focused' and 'don't talk for too long'. There are more opportunities to work collaboratively and they feel they are making 'more progress' than previously. They noted that managers are more visible around the school and are 'really interested in what we are doing'. Current data evidence shows that attainment should improve and monitoring of pupil progress is now more robust. It is also being used more effectively to target additional support in order to challenge underachievement. Performance management is supporting whole school improvement well with targets clearly focused on pupil outcomes but also more strongly on personal development linked to improving classroom provision. Subject leaders have submitted action plans for their subjects. On the whole, these are generic rather than subject specific and require further development. The curriculum is being reviewed to provide a better structure for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding across all subjects. Staff meetings address specific training requirements linked to either leadership or teaching.

Governors are more fully involved in evaluating the work of the school but acknowledge that they require further training and support in terms of challenge and use of data. They now meet termly with subject leaders to receive updates on the progress being made. Currently, they are not in a strong enough position to identify with confidence whether these are accurate. Further training has been scheduled with the local authority to enable them to consider key questions to ask of school and subject leaders in order to increase their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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:

- ensure that the school's post-ofsted plan clearly identifies specific details and appropriate actions which are designed to support the improvement process
- review and amend this planning on a regular basis in response to monitoring visits and on-going evaluation
- ensure that leaders and staff continue to work in partnership with the local authority to implement the plan and secure more rapid improvements in teaching and subject leadership

- provide training and support for governors so they can hold the school leaders and teachers to account with growing confidence
- continue the work started on developing the role of subject leaders
- continue to implement a coherent approach to staff training linked to rigorous personal appraisal targets.

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

External support

The local authority has maintained a good level of support both prior to and since the inspection. A detailed support and challenge plan has been drawn up to run parallel and complement the school's own development plan. The local authority will continue to provide termly core visits to monitor and evaluate pupil progress. In addition, specific activities such as a programme of paired observation, the role of subject leaders and additional training for governors have already been arranged. Mentoring support for the new headteacher has been brokered from an experienced colleague in a local successful primary school. In addition, the sharing of good practice between the two schools has also been arranged.

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

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector