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25 April 2013

Christopher Taylor
Headteacher
Capel Primary School
Five Oak Green Road
Tonbridge
TN12 6RP

Dear Mr Taylor

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Capel Primary School, Kent Local Authority

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan and a range of school documentation. This included the updated school self-evaluation form (SEF), data relating to pupils' attainment and progress and the analysis of that data as well as minutes of recent governing body meetings. You took me on a tour of the school and we made brief visits to all classes.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the substantive headteacher has continued to be absent and you have continued in your role as acting headteacher. You are being supported by an acting deputy headteacher and these 'acting' roles have been formalised by the governing body. The governing body has elected a new Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors. One class teacher has left the school and another will be

leaving at the end of the summer term. A newly qualified teacher has been recruited and is teaching in Year 3. A recruitment process is underway to appoint an experienced teacher for September 2013.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, you have led a significant drive to address the areas for improvement identified. With the support of your mentor, the local authority, school staff and notably the new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, you have successfully created an atmosphere of ambition and openness. Improved communication with parents, school staff and governors as well as the engagement of pupils has ensured clarity of understanding about what needs to improve, what is being done and with what effect. School senior leaders, including the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors hold a very precise view of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement.

Comprehensive, although somewhat lengthy, plans exist to address each of the key points for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The plan clearly indicates responsibilities for implementing actions and for monitoring and evaluating progress and evidencing success. Progress is being made in each area.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making good progress in their writing and achievement at the end of Key Stage 1 is set to improve this year. Three actions in particular have contributed to this improvement: more detailed analysis of pupils' progress leading to targeted support; teachers skilfully modelling writing; and a more exciting curriculum. Such approaches are being used throughout the school. Support, including for the planning and delivery of lessons, within the Early Years Foundation Stage is bringing about improvement in children's learning. Additional staffing, sound advice from a local school as well as coaching from the acting deputy headteacher are making a visible difference to children's experiences.

During this visit pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons was good. Systems for managing behaviour and responding to minor misdemeanours have been reviewed. The 'behaviour ladder' and other approaches such as 'wiggly fingers' are now used consistently. Lunchtimes have been reorganised allowing older pupils to support younger ones. Pupils understand the expectations upon them and enjoy a range of rewards such as 'star pupils' sitting with you and your acting deputy at a special table for lunch.

Leadership roles and responsibilities are more clearly defined and understood than previously. However, both you and the Chair of the Governing Body are carrying too much responsibility. Governors have undergone a review and have carried out their own skills audit. Proposals exist to restructure the governing body and the leadership structure of the school.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last inspection.

Following my visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- ensure that all members of the governing body understand their roles and responsibilities and make an effective contribution to governance
- develop the role of middle leaders so that responsibilities for securing further improvement are shared more widely
- work with the local authority to refine the school improvement plan
- ensure that pupil premium funding is directly used to promote the achievement of identified pupils and that the impact of this spending is evaluated
- strengthen the leadership and management of special educational needs and disabilities, so that this group of pupils make progress similar to that of their peers.

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

External support

The individualised support of your mentor, brokered and funded by the local authority, has been central in securing your confidence to lead the school forward. A governor mentor is now also providing bespoke advice to the Chair of the Governing Body. Positive relationships with the mentor's school and other schools locally are providing an excellent resource. The local authority is delivering a strong steer for improvement through regular 'progress and impact' meetings. They have further agreed to broker support to strengthen leadership of special educational needs and disabilities and to support you in refining the school improvement plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector