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30 April 2013

Mrs Rowe
Woodham Burn Community Primary School
Humphrey Close
Newton Aycliffe
County Durham
DL5 4EX

Dear Mrs Rowe

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Woodham Burn Community Primary School, Durham County Local Authority.

Following my visit to your school on the 30 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plans, governing body minutes and current assessment data of pupils' performance was evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection one teacher has returned from long term sickness absence and a teacher with Year 1 and Year 2 experience has moved into Key Stage 1.

Main findings

Senior leaders, the local authority and the governing body acted rapidly to develop and implement specific plans to tackle the areas identified for improvement at the

time of the inspection. Actions, targets and timescales are generally clear and ambitious. Discussion with the headteacher and middle leaders show a wide range of actions are taking place to hasten the progress of pupils with special educational needs or a disability. However, improvement plans do not identify these actions sharply enough. This means it is hard for governors to pinpoint exactly which actions are making the most difference when monitoring the improvement plan. The movement of an expert teacher into Key Stage 1, along with improvements to the way teachers make sure younger pupils use their knowledge of letters and sounds to improve their writing, has already made a positive difference to the progress these pupils have made in the past month. Middle leaders are more fully involved in monitoring teaching, planning, pupils' work books and their progress across the school. Staff have benefitted from working with a local outstanding school to improve how they check pupils' work and plan for their next steps in lessons. The governing body quickly increased the number of meetings they have so they can more regularly monitor the impact of actions taken to improve the school. Evidence from governing body minutes show they receive detailed information about the progress of pupils including those with special educational needs or a disability and pupils entitled to free school meals. They ask challenging questions about the performance of these different groups of pupils. They also receive reports indicating that teaching is improving, but not by how much.

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:

- pinpoint the actions being taking to hasten progress of pupils with special educational needs or a disability in the school's improvement plan so governors can check the impact of these actions more carefully.
- make sure governors receive information about the proportion of lessons that are good or better so they can check how well actions are leading to improvement.

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

External support

The school was already receiving external support from local authority officers prior to the inspection but support has rightly been increased further through additional school improvement officer time. School improvement officers have worked with leaders and governors regularly since the inspection to make sure that the actions taken to tackle the school's weaknesses have occurred quickly and also to secure additional advice and support where needed. For example, they have brokered successful school-to-school support from two local schools. These arrangements are having an impact on improvements in planning within the school and the development of more rigorous performance management processes.

PROTECT-INSPECTION



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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector