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30 April 2013

Mr Chris Ashley
Headteacher
Fairfield Community Primary School
Rochdale Old Road
Bury
Lancashire
BL9 7SD

Dear Mr Ashley

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Fairfield Community Primary School, Bury

Following my visit to your school on 29 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 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with yourself, your senior leadership team, three members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, and a group of ten pupils. The school's action plan was evaluated. Reference was also made to the school's systems for recording the progress pupils are making. Furthermore, 58 online responses and 165 paper responses to Parent View were considered.

Context

Since the inspection of February 2013, the deputy headteacher has been released from her full-time teaching commitment for at least part of each week in order to reshape the school's systems for assessing and recording the progress pupils are making. In addition, two members of teaching staff have tendered their resignations: one with effect from the end of the summer term 2013; the other with effect from the end of the autumn term 2013.

Main findings

The headteacher, his senior leadership team and governors have acted with urgency and determination to bring about improvement since the inspection of February 2013. The plans that have been put in place are clear and show intended outcomes for pupils. They focus rightly on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. Plans for the governing body focus – also correctly - on how governors may develop the skills to ask the right questions of leaders in order to hold them to account for the performance of the school. The local authority has plans to support the governing body in this work. As a result of the swift action taken by leaders and governors, there is a strong air of confidence that improvements will be achieved and sustained. The positive responses received via Parent View indicate a large majority of parents share this confidence too. Pupils spoken with expressed their enjoyment of school.

Senior leaders have identified accurately the need to demonstrate what progress has and is being made by pupils, including those from different groups, those entitled to free school meals or those with special educational needs for example. This highlights well the increased rigour in which leaders are checking what needs to be done to improve the school. The documentation teachers use to record this information has been revised and the number of meetings held between senior leaders and teachers to discuss pupil progress has been increased. The result is that, already, leaders have a clearer view of which pupils are in need of additional support to keep their learning on course and which pupils need extra challenge as they are performing at a better-than-expected level. The local authority has plans in place to support teachers and leaders further in this work. Senior leaders have also recognised their need to enhance their view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

In conclusion, the headteacher, 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:

- ensure all staff become increasingly confident and adept in using the revised systems to check pupils' progress to demonstrate how well their pupils are learning.

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

External support

The local authority's support and challenge is matched well to the school's needs. It too has an accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved. It has brokered an external review of governance. This review, undertaken by a National Leader, is to take place in June 2013.

Additional input from HMI

- HMI will contact the headteacher in late June 2013 to discuss actions taken to date and whether or not any impact is evident.
- At a date to be arranged, HMI will in autumn 2013 undertake joint observations with members of the senior leadership team in order to strengthen their ability to judge accurately the quality of teaching and learning and, if required, make clear to those observed the steps that need to be taken to secure improvement.
- At a date to be arranged, HMI will in Spring 2014 review with senior leaders how effectively the school's revised systems for recording the progress pupils are making is presenting evidence that pupils are demonstrating at least expected and good levels of progress.

I hope you have found this visit useful in helping you promote improvement in your school. I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bury local authority.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector