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Mr R McMurdo
Headteacher
Higher Lane Primary School
Egerton Road
Whitefield
Manchester
M45 7EX

Dear Mr McMurdo

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

Following my visit to your school on 30 April 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 my visit, meetings were held with yourself, your senior leadership team, three representatives of the governing body, two representatives of the local authority, ten pupils and the two serving headteachers who will share the leadership of the school in the autumn term of 2013. The school action plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was taken into account, including that relating to the quality of teaching and marking. Furthermore, 31 online questionnaires from Parent View were considered.

Context

Since the inspection of February 2013 the headteacher, himself a Local Leader of Education, has given notice he will leave the school at the end of the summer term 2013. The governing body have begun the process to appoint a substantive headteacher who, it is hoped, will take up post in January 2014. For an interim period, two experienced headteachers – one a National Leader and the other a Local Leader of Education will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the school. The school is also hoping to create two new leadership roles: one to develop further pupils' writing; the other to develop pupils' reading. In addition, a new Chair and Vice Chair of the governing body have been elected.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The findings of that inspection were of no surprise; indeed, because of open and honest dialogue between leaders, governors and the local authority, the areas that required improvement had already been identified. As a result, leaders were able to take swift action to begin improving these areas. Two examples illustrate this. First, fortnightly checks of pupils' work is highlighting to leaders improving consistency in the way teachers mark work and give feedback to pupils. Second, to help improve the quality of pupils' writing and provide opportunities for them to write in different subjects, the process is underway to appoint a leader who from September 2013 will be responsible for checking the quality of the teaching and learning of writing.

The school's action plan identifies the right priorities and has challenging expectations. As discussed, the plan to improve teaching will serve pupils even better if it focuses on teaching as a whole, taking into account pupil progress for example, rather than just focusing on the proportion of individual lessons judged to be good or better.

The capacity of senior leaders to bring about improvement is developing well. The school has in place plans to develop this further; indeed this is to be a key element of the work of the current headteacher and the National and Local Leaders of Education. These leaders and the governing body are in the process of drawing up plans to move the school forward between now and when the new headteacher takes up post, and, during this period, ensuring stability for pupils, parents and staff. Importantly, all these leaders and governors are united in their desire to bring about sustainable improvement swiftly. The governors' process for appointing a new headteacher is structured well.

Pupils spoken with during this visit were positive about the school and said how much they enjoyed it. The majority of parents who expressed their opinion via Parent View were also positive.

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

- revise the targets for improving teaching quality so that successes rely not just on the percentage of observed lessons judged to be good or better, but also take into account other measures such as assessments of pupils' learning and pupils' work in books.

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

External support

Good support and challenge is being provided to the school by the local authority, not least in the arrangements to provide continuity of leadership with the appointment of National and Local Leaders of Education to work with the school. The local authority's support and challenge is matched well to the school's needs and is based on an accurate view of strengths and what needs to be improved.

Additional input from HMI

- HMI will contact the headteacher in early July 2013 and the National and Local Leaders of Education in the autumn term of 2013 to discuss actions taken to date and whether or not any impact is evident.
- HMI will also advise:
 - the headteacher of examples in inspection reports where schools have been judged to be good or better in promoting pupils' writing across the curriculum
 - the Chair of the governing body of examples in inspection reports where governors have held leaders to account for the performance of the school.
- At a date to be arranged, HMI will in Spring 2014 review with:
 - the substantive headteacher any input that may be appropriate
 - the governing body opportunities to observe how effectively they are questioning the new headteacher and senior leaders in order to ascertain what support and challenge members are giving to the school.

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.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector