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8 May 2013

Mrs Karen Riley
Headteacher
Sharlston Community School
Hammer Lane
Sharlston Common
Wakefield
West Yorkshire
WF4 1DH

Dear Mrs Riley

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit to Sharlston Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 May 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

I held meetings with the headteacher and with senior and middle leaders, with the Chair of the Governing Body, and with a representative of the local authority. During my visit I evaluated the school's improvement plans, looked at documents relating to the work of the school and was taken on a tour of the school.

Context

Since the inspection, two teachers have left the school. Temporary teachers are currently covering two classes in the school. The early years leader starts a period of extended leave next week and a new leader will take up this role in June. The headteacher, together with members of the governing body and the local authority, has recruited a new assistant headteacher and three other teachers who will join the school in September 2013.

Main findings

Leaders, governors and the local authority all agree the judgements and the issues identified by the last inspection were the correct ones. Immediate action was taken following the inspection to address the principal concerns raised about teaching. This has resulted in improvements in the teaching in Key Stage 1. However, leaders and governors are clear there is still further work to do in improving teaching. They have appointed a number of new middle leaders for September with proven skills and experience.

Until these new leaders start, the roles of subject leaders have been reorganised into phases with leaders taking responsibility for both English and mathematics for older or younger pupils. Leaders have undertaken a scrutiny of teachers' marking and planning and have a clear view of where there are strengths and weaknesses. Leaders have carried out joint observations of teaching to ensure there is a shared understanding of what is meant by 'good teaching'. This has resulted in helpful feedback to teachers and a new marking policy has been agreed. However, more rapid progress on improving teaching is, to some extent, 'on hold' until September.

The current improvement plan only covers actions up until July 2013. Leaders and governors accept that a new, sharper, longer-term plan is needed. They intend to draft this plan during the summer term ready for September. In particular this plan needs to include precise criteria to ensure leaders and governors clearly understand what 'good' looks like. Similarly, there should be measurable milestones to enable leaders and governors to accurately check school's progress on its journey to 'good'. This will enable governors to hold all leaders to account more effectively.

The school is drafting plans to improve the outside provision in the Reception class and will be working with a cluster of schools in an 'Early Excellence Partnership'.

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:

- improve the school's action plans to include more detailed information from monitoring of the schools work, clear links between actions and the intended success criteria with precise, measurable criteria and milestones

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

External support

The local authority officer has worked with school leaders in checking the quality of pupils' work and observing teaching. Together with a package of assistance from the local authority for 'securing good', the local authority has brokered the support of a local headteacher to work with the new leadership team in September.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy
Her Majesty's Inspector