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Annette Burns
Amington Heath Primary School and Nursery
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Dear Mrs Burns

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Amington Heath Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 7 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 on 5 December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the acting-headteacher, the inclusion manager, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body along with three additional governors, and a telephone conversation with representative of the local authority. The school action plans were evaluated. The lead inspector also toured the school with the acting headteacher and visited all classes while pupils were in lessons. He also visited assembly and met with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. The single central record was also checked.

Context

There have been significant staffing changes since the last inspection. The headteacher resigned his post in March 2013. The Governing Body asked the deputy headteacher to assume the role of acting headteacher until a substantive headteacher appointment could be made. Two teachers also resigned and left the school in December 2012. Since January 2013, four teachers, an inclusion manager

and an office manager have been recruited to the school. One new governor has also been appointed.

Main findings

All leaders agree that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are too low across the school because teaching is variable and acknowledge that there is an urgent need to raise standards. To this end, the acting headteacher has implemented several improvements to teaching and learning since her appointment in April 2013. Success criteria and learning intentions have been introduced by teachers for every lesson. Increased opportunities are being provided for pupils to respond to teachers' comments in their exercise books by using green pens before the start of each lesson. Teaching assistants are also being better targeted to pupils identified as requiring additional support. However, all these strategies are in the early stages of development and school leaders cannot yet demonstrate sustained impact on pupils' attainment and progress. Learning walks are now carried out regularly by the acting headteacher who provides teachers with clear feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of their work. However, the acting headteacher's class teaching commitment has prevented her from developing her coaching and mentoring role of newly appointed staff fully. Nevertheless, the secondment of an outstanding teacher from a neighbouring school and imminent classroom release has created the potential for this work to be developed more routinely in forthcoming weeks.

Systems for tracking pupils' progress have not been robust enough in the past. A new data system has been implemented in recent weeks which is beginning to hold staff to account for progress made by pupils. A wide range of strategies have been implemented to promote pupils' attendance and punctuality. As a result, the acting headteacher and inclusion manager can point to good improvements in attendance. Pupils are coming to school more regularly, on time and the number of persistent absentees has reduced. Pupils spoke with confidence about how behaviour has improved. They said that 'adults are visible' and 'if we have a problem it always gets sorted.'

Leaders and managers in the school are increasing their confidence. Staff and governors are asking more questions; communication is improving and there is a unified commitment and drive to secure further improvements. The recruitment of a core of newly appointed governors has strengthened the governing body. Governors are increasing their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses although they know that some members need further training so that work of the governing body can be shared out more evenly. The performance management of teachers has not been carried out in the prescribed manner but is due to be undertaken from September 2013.

The acting headteacher has strengthened the school action plan. Actions, milestones and outcomes for both pupils and staff are clearly focused on raising standards and the plan contains measureable outcomes. However, the monitoring and evaluation

section is not clear or specific enough and the role of the governing body is not clearly identified. During the visit, the single central record was checked and met current requirements.

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 quality of teaching in school by coaching, mentoring and inducting new staff effectively
- ensure that the monitoring section of the school's action plan specifies precisely when and who will monitor the schools priorities, how this will be shared with staff and governors and the part governors will play in this activity
- provide further training and support for governors so they can increase their confidence and understanding, and share more equitably the responsibilities for holding the school to account for standards and quality
- undertake the performance management of teachers from September 2013
- begin the process of recruiting a substantive headteacher to the school
- ensure continuity and stability during this period of change.

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

External support

The local authority has maintained a good level of support. It continues to provide termly core visits. The appointment of a Local Leader of Education and brokering the secondment of an outstanding teacher is providing much needed professional support for the acting headteacher. Consultant support has been provided for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The Education Welfare Officer has given good advice to school leaders which has helped to secure improvements in attendance and punctuality. The governors have benefitted from, and valued the support provided by the local authority's Human Resources team.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector