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13 May 2013

Mrs V Knox
Elm Park Primary School
South End Road
Elm Park
Hornchurch
RM12 5UA

Dear Mrs Knox

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Elm Park Primary School, Havering

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers and support staff, the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions were held with pupils. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A review of classrooms was also undertaken with the headteacher.

Context

Two phase leaders and three class teachers will leave at the end of July 2013. Appointments have been made to replace them in September.

Main findings

Improvement strategies planned after the inspection are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement, especially in English. Pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1 and Year 5, are making better progress. Senior teachers responsible for different areas of the school's work are more accountable for their actions. They have increased their level of monitoring, and they have a better understanding of where attention needs to be paid to ensure further improvements are made. The headteacher has taken difficult but effective decisions to manage teachers' underperformance. In addition to this, the sharper assessment of teaching has resulted in an increase of good teaching. Continued professional development to improve teachers' practice in challenging pupils, talk less and improve their marking has had good impact. Teachers say they have been well supported to improve their teaching. Improvements in marking are increasing pupils' understanding of how well they are progressing. A strong focus on literacy has improved pupils' grammar and presentation in writing across the school. Pupils say writing topics are more interesting. Good examples of pupils' work are displayed in some classrooms. Regular book reviews, classroom checks and the introduction of peer observations are presenting a more accurate view of teaching improvements and where further changes are required. However, leaders need to consider pupils' achievement when assessing how well teaching is improving over time. In addition, leaders need to assess the effectiveness of teaching assistants in supporting pupils in lessons.

All the areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been fully incorporated into school planning. However, some plans are not specific enough to give a precise view of how well actions are working. Sometimes, target dates for improvement are missing.

Members of the governing body have taken steps to record in more detail the challenges made to school leaders. There is now a governor responsible for reviewing pupils' progress and to ensure that pupils' performance information is understood by the governing body. However, this work has only just begun. Consequently, governors lack in-depth knowledge of how well pupils are making progress or how quickly teaching is improving. Their expectations are not high enough.

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, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- sharpen the improvement plan so that the impact of actions can be fully measured. More precise time frames and outcomes are required.

- increase the effectiveness of how well the governing body scrutinise the school's work by undertaking their reviews of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching more quickly and in greater depth.

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

External support

The local authority is providing appropriate support to improve teachers' assessment of pupils and build the capacity of leaders. Work to develop partnerships with other local schools has had good impact in improving the quality of teaching in writing. Support for senior leaders has worked well to strengthen their ability to assess the quality of lessons and monitor the school's performance. Further support is now required to accelerate improvements in the quality of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Havering. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter will be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Director of Children's Services for Havering