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4 June 2013

Mrs Gail Hard
Headteacher
The Dawnay School
Griffin Way
Leatherhead
KT23 4JJ

Dear Mrs Hard

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to The Dawnay School, Surrey.

Following my visit to your school on 4 June 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the assistant headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, two representatives of the local authority and a consultant headteacher working with you on behalf of the local authority to help bring about improvement. I evaluated the school improvement plan and you escorted me on a tour of the school during which time I was able to observe the calm and purposeful learning environment and the newly introduced 'behaviour ladder' in each room. I also scrutinised performance management information and other documentation that you use to record evidence of your 'drop-ins' to lessons.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection you have revised your school development plan to address the points for improvement identified within the previous inspection and some aspects are beginning to yield success.

Your main focus has been to improve the quality of teaching. A comprehensive coaching programme has been introduced, led by your assistant headteacher. This has involved externally moderated joint observations and is beginning to secure improvements. Teachers are being supported to develop their skills, have left or moved into alternative roles. You have set up regular unannounced drop-in visits to lessons in which you expect to see teaching that motivates and engages pupils. However, there is insufficient focus on progress in these drop-ins and you are not fully exploiting them to see if work is pitched at the right level, or if it offers sufficient challenge.

During my visit, you were able to evidence better progress being made across all year groups than at the same time last year. You attribute this to the more robust monitoring of teaching that is now taking place. However, a few pupils are still under-achieving in relation to their targets set and some of these targets are not challenging enough. You and your governors acknowledge this. Teachers are aware of the shortfall and extra support is being provided for identified pupils to help them catch up. You rightly intend to take further action if a shortfall is still evident early in September.

Governors have recognised the need to strengthen leadership capacity. To this end, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed with expertise in school improvement. Governors have also agreed to provide the necessary funding to pay for the new deputy headteacher's release from her current school for a day each fortnight to ensure that no time is lost when she begins work in September. They have actively sought advice from governors of stronger schools on asking challenging questions and monitoring the impact of leadership on teaching and learning. Monitoring of the school development plan is robust; the Chair of Governors is determined to see improvement and quality assures all governor activity.

A behaviour ladder has been introduced, is known to all pupils and is visible in all classrooms. This has been welcomed by pupils and staff and is contributing to the calm atmosphere within the school. Governors have already arranged for an audit of this strategy to take place before the end of the summer term, which will provide evidence of its impact.

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 that judgements on the quality of teaching are substantiated by a full range of evidence, particularly work scrutiny and standards achieved
- ensure that teachers are fully aware of their accountability to improve pupils' standards and rates of progress and that they recognise how they are being supported to do this

- ensure leaders take the necessary action to call teachers to account
- re-visit the process of target setting in Key Stage 2 so that targets set provide sufficient challenge now; where additional support is needed to meet these, ensure this is factored in.

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

External support

The local authority is providing effective support. A consultant headteacher has very recently been assigned to the school, with experience in supporting other schools to improve. She intends to become fully involved. Subsequent to the inspection, her deputy headteacher provided joint observations alongside the school's leaders. Prior to this, the school received regular input and advice from a local authority school improvement partner. Governors and leaders have welcomed the advice and support they have received. They would benefit from further support on challenging teachers to improve and their practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Farmer
Her Majesty's Inspector