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Roslin Owen
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Ms Owen

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Burnt Oak Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 22 May 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 the visit, meetings were held with you, the executive deputy headteacher, senior and middle leaders, two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I toured the school with you and four Year 6 pupils and visited every classroom. I met small groups of Year 3 and Year 6 pupils in their classrooms to look at their work. I evaluated the school action plans and scrutinised a range of other documents including pupil progress data, professional development plans, minutes of governing body and the Partnership Board meetings.

Context

There have been no significant staff changes since the last inspection. The executive deputy headteacher is now based full time in the school and a member of staff has taken on the role of curriculum leader.

Main findings

The executive headteacher and senior leaders have acted with speed and determination to accelerate the rate of improvement, with actions based firmly on the issues identified in the recent inspection. They have developed a well-crafted short-term action plan based on prioritising actions identified in academic year plan. Both plans have clear time scales and success criteria for evaluating progress in relation to improving teaching and raising pupils' achievement. However, as the school develops next year's academic plan, leaders should include interim milestones for reviewing progress to ensure they maintain the more rapid rate of improvement.

The new curriculum leader has developed a clear curriculum overview for teaching across all subjects and year groups. This is making clearer the explicit links between subjects. It is helping teachers adopt a more consistent approach to planning, and ensuring that they set their expectations high enough for the most able pupils. All pupils have curriculum targets in literacy and numeracy but they need more opportunities to assess their own progress in these across all curriculum subjects, particularly in mathematics.

The executive head and deputy headteachers are taking a much more rigorous approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and staff are making good use of the training and guidance they have put in place. The school has adopted a common approach to planning. All teachers now specify the learning expectations for the most able pupils. Impact in the classroom is apparent, and there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching. Lesson pace is brisk, work is well pitched and learning is more active. Teachers using questioning more effectively to check on, extend and adjust pupils' learning. Pupils across the school spoke animatedly about their learning, and how lessons are now more challenging and interesting. Leaders have conducted an audit of boys' interests. They are using this information to raise boys' achievement in writing. Further training to support this initiative is underway.

The greater focus on assessment is providing a clear picture of the progress made by individuals, groups and classes. This is helping teachers to target intervention more sharply. For example, the positive impact of the writing and mathematics additional sessions on the attainment of the most able pupils has been recognised and is now starting in Year 4. Phonics sessions have been put in place for those needing additional support in reading, with some early signs of positive impact.

All teachers adopt a consistent approach to marking. The school has extended the 'great green – think pink' marking initiative from literacy to all subjects. This enables pupils to recognise key learning ('great green') and be given small additional tasks or challenges ('think pink'). This can be seen in almost all of their books. It reflects the determination for consistency of practice.

Governors are taking a more active approach to checking on the work of the school. They have sought advice so they are now better equipped on how to check

rigorously on performance management, its relationship with the quality of teaching and learning, and how this links with salary progression. They are making more visits into school and using these to focus on different aspects of the action plans, such as boys' writing. Governors are asking more challenging questions. However, it would be helpful to specify explicitly their role in monitoring and evaluating the school action plan.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- develop a system that enables pupils to make use of their literacy and numeracy targets in all subjects and so take even greater responsibility for their own learning
- ensure there are interim milestones for evaluating progress of future action plans and explicitly define governors' role in monitoring these plans.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority and the collaborative partnership with Chatsworth Infants School (part of the Lamorbey Lane Partnership) are providing refocused and effective support to the school. For example, personalised, professional development and whole-school training sessions delivered by local authority representatives have helped the focus on providing challenge for more able pupils. This has led to better teaching, greater engagement of pupils and improvements in their progress. The school is making effective use of a new partnership with a primary school, through a series of carefully targeted visits to enable all teachers and leaders observe high quality teaching and planning in action.

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

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector