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6 June 2013

Dr R Neeves
Headteacher
Speenhamland Primary School
Pelican Lane
Newbury
RG14 1NU

Dear Dr Neeves

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Speenhamland Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 June 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated.

Context

There have been no major changes to the overall context of the school though staffing has been unsettled since the inspection.

Main findings

There is a clear drive from senior leaders to improve the school. The headteacher and senior staff have a good grasp of what needs to be done. New and detailed procedures for thoroughly checking the performance of pupils and teachers have been successfully introduced. Senior leaders very effectively use their extensive

database to check the progress of individual and specific groups of pupils, including those in receipt of the Pupil Premium; additional government funding. This information is helping school leaders and the governing body to form a more accurate and overall 'picture' of how well the school is performing. A detailed action plan for improvement has been written to show what needs to be done but there is not enough clarity about which improvements can be checked and achieved more quickly and those which may take longer to fully address.

Following changes to staffing, appropriate steps are being taken by the headteacher to re-allocate key responsibilities amongst senior staff in order to 'press-on' more quickly with the necessary changes to improve the school. However, detailed job descriptions have yet to be formally adopted. Matters relating to staffing have slowed the speed at which some improvements could be progressed. The headteacher's monitoring indicates that teaching is showing signs of improvement.

The governing body has responded positively to the review of its effectiveness. Increasingly, governors are visiting the school to see how it operates on a day-to-day basis. The governing body is more effective. Their committees have been re-organised and this is leading to more efficient scrutiny and management of key information about school performance. This is successfully broadening the information all governors use to support and challenge senior leaders to quickly improve the school.

School leaders have correctly placed much emphasis on improving the effectiveness in the way pupils are taught reading and writing skills, including the careful and systematic teaching of phonics (letter sounds). All staff have attended training in order to introduce these new approaches. It is too early yet to show the impact on pupils' achievements. Senior leaders have carefully considered how the new approaches will be introduced and importantly how they will be monitored.

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:

- Make clearer which actions can be achieved quickly and those which may take longer.
- Ensure that all staff know exactly how they can contribute to school improvement on a day-to-day and longer term basis.

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 has provided good support to the headteacher, especially while managing complex staffing matters. On-going helpful support from the school adviser, who has recent and relevant headship experience, is providing the

headteacher with appropriate challenge and advice to expedite the necessary improvements. Senior local authority personnel keep a close eye on how the school is improving.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Towl

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority