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11 June 2013

Ms S Mines
Headteacher
Mile Oak Primary School
Graham Avenue
Brighton
BN41 2WN

Dear Ms Mines

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mile Oak Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 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 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher and with the Chair of the Governing Body. I also had a telephone conversation with the consultant working with your school on behalf of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated. Information about pupils' progress and attainment and minutes of governing body meetings since the section 5 inspection were reviewed.

Context

Since the last inspection, two substantive teachers have replaced two employed by the school on a temporary basis. Changes to the programme for pupils needing additional help mean that these pupils are seldom withdrawn from the mainstream curriculum; they are given individual help within lessons.

Main findings

Your school's leaders, including its governors, share a clear and ambitious strategic vision and a readiness to take appropriate action to tackle areas of weakness and to build on current strengths. The introductory section of your action plan usefully breaks down the issues presented in the last inspection report into manageable sections, with realistic dates for completion. The plan as a whole, however, is repetitive and the targets are often too generalised to give planning and monitoring of progress the urgency and precision needed. It is not always clear who has hands-on responsibility for an initiative, who is to monitor its implementation and who is to evaluate its impact on pupils' learning. The monitoring of teaching by senior leaders is regular but too little attention is paid to the impact teachers make on pupils' progress over time when evaluating their effectiveness.

The verve and inventiveness with which you and your staff persuade pupils and their families that reading is both a fundamental aspect of learning and a source of shared and individual enjoyment have created a confident and engaging school culture. The proportion of pupils gaining above average reading levels by the end of Year 6 has increased since 2011. Similar initiatives to improve pupils' writing are beginning to have an impact. Boys as well as girls across the age and ability range respond with enthusiasm and thought to your deputy headteacher's invitation to bring him pieces they have written independently. Not all groups are yet making good progress. As you acknowledge, more needs to be done to improve the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Literacy levels across the school remain uneven, particularly in Years 4 and 5 and in the Reception class. This unevenness is now being tackled through a more systematic approach to the development of core skills. Government funding (the Pupil Premium) has provided well-directed, additional teaching assistant support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.

In summary, 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 steps to:

- make the action plan succinct and precise, with specific and measurable targets that make progress easier to track, and with greater clarity about roles and responsibilities
- ensure that the evaluation of teaching correlates with up-to-date information about pupils' achievement.

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 provides useful support through its monitoring of the school's progress towards improved teaching and learning, through consultancy and relevant

training for the governors. The school also benefits from the University of Brighton's programme for gifted and talented pupils, from active involvement with the Portslade cluster of schools and from participation by your coordinator for special educational needs support in the Hove cluster of schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector