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Jenny Wallbank
Headteacher
Stoneydelph Primary School
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Dear Ms Wallbank

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stoneydelph Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, and the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including information about pupils' achievement, notes of pupil progress meetings, and feedback to teachers following reviews of pupils' work. During this visit, you and the deputy headteacher joined me on short visits to some lessons to review pupils' work and to talk to pupils about their learning.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the recent inspection which judged the school to require improvement.

Main findings

The actions that have been taken since the inspection are not helping pupils in all classes to make faster progress. This is because procedures for checking the quality of teaching are weak. Not all the senior leaders in the school have the skills and abilities required to provide teachers with the precise guidance they need to improve their practice. For instance, reviews of pupils' work place too much emphasis on presentation in books and not enough on learning. When concerns about the quality of teaching are identified such as in Key Stage 1, these are not followed up quickly enough. Similarly, senior leaders' feedback to teachers after observations of lessons does not always identify the specific actions that need to be taken by teachers to help pupils make better progress.

There has been a stronger focus on helping pupils develop their mathematical skills through providing more practical activities. Pupils commented that mathematics lessons are now more interesting. Teachers are also giving pupils more frequent opportunities to solve complex mathematical problems. However, these changes have not been sufficient to ensure pupils in all classes make rapid progress. Work in mathematics books shows that in some classes, the work for more-able pupils is not challenging enough. In contrast, the work for pupils who need extra help is sometimes too difficult. On occasions, teachers do not show pupils the best way of solving mathematical problems quickly. As a result pupils struggle and make errors in their work.

Governors continue to ask suitable questions about the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils. You, together with the deputy headteacher regularly check the progress of different group of pupils and share this information with the governing body. However, this information is not always clearly presented. This makes it difficult for all governors to check if you and the other senior leaders are making enough of a difference to pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school improvement plan indicates how the quality of teaching will be improved and how pupils will be helped to make faster progress. It does not specify the detailed actions that will be taken to help strengthen the skills of senior teachers. Neither does it state who will evaluate the impact of the actions in the plan.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school, with support from the local authority should take immediate action to:

- strengthen the skills of senior leaders so that they are able to rigorously check the quality of teaching, provide teachers with the specific guidance they need, and follow up concerns quickly
- make sure that all teachers plan mathematical activities which match the learning needs of pupils of different abilities and that teachers show pupils how to solve different types of problems

- ensure governors receive clearly presented information about pupils' progress so that they can check that all leaders are making enough of a difference to pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics
- ensure the school improvement plan clearly states who will evaluate the impact of the actions in the plan and identifies the detailed actions that will be taken to strengthen leadership.

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

I would like to meet with the full governing body as soon as possible to discuss the findings from this visit.

External support

The impact of the local authority has been limited. Since the inspection, the local authority adviser has made one visit to the school and reviewed the school's improvement plan. The local authority has allocated funds so that the school can purchase additional support. You have used some of this funding and arranged for an experienced headteacher to work with senior leaders from September 2013. I recommend that the local authority takes urgent action to strengthen leadership by providing you with immediate support.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi

Her Majesty's Inspector