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Miss Joanne Ramsbottom
Headteacher
Farington Primary School
Rose Street
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Lancashire
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Dear Miss Ramsbottom

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Farington Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit with John Nixon, Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 14 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, six members of the governing body including the chair and vice-chair, and the associate adviser from the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plans were evaluated, including one written by the governing body. We also attended the whole-school celebration assembly at the start of the morning and undertook a tour of the school.

Context

There are currently no significant changes to the school's context or staffing since the inspection in April 2013. However, the school is anticipating changes with effect from September following a review of class and staffing structures due to a rise in the number of pupils on roll. The changes incorporate an additional class, enabling teaching to take place in single year group classes. A new community governor has recently been appointed.

Main findings

Since the inspection you have acted quickly to adjust the school's action plans and increase the effectiveness of the work of staff and governors. You and the deputy headteacher have carried out lesson observations jointly with a local authority school improvement team leader and the school's associate adviser. These demonstrated your common agreement on lesson judgements through a clear focus on the progress pupils make. They also provided evidence of the impact of recent training in the development of teachers' questioning skills. For example, you have observed teachers using 'hot seating' and other questioning strategies in lessons to extend pupils' learning and deepen their understanding. A review of the resources available for guiding reading has resulted in the identification of strengths in provision and of specific gaps in resources, such as a wider selection of texts from which to develop Key Stage 2 pupils' understanding of persuasion techniques.

From September 2013, the structure of classes has been adjusted to allow more closely focused teaching with respect to age-related expectations. In addition to this, pupils who do not make enough progress in individual lessons will continue to receive short sessions of targeted support from teaching assistants. This immediate response to specific needs is planned to reduce the potential impact of removing pupils from other curriculum areas for extended periods of time. However, we discussed the need for leaders to develop further the strategic tracking of the progress made by those pupils, along with the ability to present this data succinctly. You also recognise the importance of developing opportunities to spread leadership responsibilities more widely, through the roles of subject co-ordinators such as English and mathematics.

The school's action plans are well laid out and reflect its key priorities well. Similarly, the governing body's action plan is well constructed and uses audit questions very effectively to focus governors' attention on development needs. Governors have created a clear monitoring plan which includes appropriate, challenging questions to leaders. Both the school and governors' action plans can be further enhanced by including more sharply focused success criteria related to measurable outcomes. Milestones within the plans should be used to check on progress towards achieving objectives at key points across the year. Governors recognise the need to continue their development of challenge in holding the school to account.

Training for staff since the last inspection has focused on key priorities and is contributing to their increased knowledge and confidence, for example in questioning and the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and reading. Training is also enhancing the skills of teaching assistants, who willingly engage in professional development activities. Governors have benefitted from a good range of face-to-face and online courses that meet their needs. Some are even following national 'twitter feeds' on the subject of good governance. Collaboration with other schools is proving mutually beneficial in the sharing of information and ideas, including through teachers' moderation of each other's assessments of pupils' writing.

Your current information on pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics shows a continuing rising trend. Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve their identified targets that are in line with or exceed national averages.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

The school is on the right path to secure further improvement in pupils' achievement. We have agreed that you, your deputy headteacher and the Chair of Governors will take up the invitation to attend an Ofsted seminar in Manchester next month, on the theme of 'Getting to Good'.

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

You are drawing effectively on the support of the local authority. The associate adviser has built up a well-informed and positive relationship with the school since the start of the academic year. The governing body has appreciated the quality of the advice and training provided for them by the authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Marguerite Murphy

Her Majesty's Inspector