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17 June 2013

Mrs Sue Bridges
Headteacher
Owler Brook Primary School
Wensley Street
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S4 8HQ

Dear Mrs Bridges

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Owler Brook Primary School, Sheffield

Following my visit 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and a range of evidence were evaluated, including some pupils' work. The headteacher took HMI on a tour of the school.

Context

A new assistant headteacher joined the school after Easter. There will be six new members of staff in September, including a year 6 phase leader and at least four NQTs.

An extra class of 30 reception children will join the school in September and there will be year 5 classes for the first time.

Main findings

Since the inspection the Headteacher and the assistant Headteacher have tackled the areas for improvement with considerable rigour and enthusiasm. There is a well thought out improvement plan.

Staff have been involved in developing both the improvement plan and the teaching and learning policy which has given them ownership of the changes. There are strong systems in place to monitor teaching and learning both formally and informally. As a result coaching plans are produced which provide teachers with key actions for improvement linked to appropriate training and support. The number of lessons where teaching and learning are judged to be good or better has improved since the inspection but this is still not consistently good enough.

There has been a wide ranging programme of professional development which has improved teaching in literacy and numeracy. Middle leaders have been well supported in developing their monitoring role, working with consultants to increase their consistency in observing lessons and giving feedback.

The assistant headteacher is driving improvements in planning to make sure that it meets the needs of all learners, especially the most able. There is a new marking and feedback policy with a focus on "steps to success". Steps to success helps meet the needs of pupils, challenging them to develop their skills and helping them to understand their next steps. Pupils are very keen to share their steps to success and are proud of what they have learnt. This improvement is very effectively monitored by middle leaders every week. Marking provides pupils with clear guidance about how to improve the quality of their work.

The monitoring of pupil progress is now the responsibility of all teachers who analyse the data of their pupils and share it with their team. Middle leaders work with their teams to identify pupils who need extra help. The impact of this extra help is carefully monitored. Data shows that there has been an improvement in progress since the inspection.

Governors understand the areas for improvement included in the plan and they continue to support and challenge the leadership team, however they need to develop a rigorous approach to monitoring the actions for improvement and their impact.

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:

- rapidly embed the changes which are improving teaching and learning so that they are always good or better
- ensure that governors scrutinise the improvement plan at regular intervals and monitor its impact
- have clear action plans in place to induct and develop the large number of new staff starting in September so that the speed of improvement does not slow down

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 considerable support, including financial support, to develop the provision for the very large number of new arrivals to the school. This has had a positive impact on the rapid inclusion of these pupils. They have also assisted with moderation in the early years and with pupils whose first language is not English.

The headteacher and the governors are using funding appropriately to finance a number of consultants to provide highly effective training for teachers and middle leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

Her Majesty's Inspector