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20 June 2013

Mr Andrew Card
Headteacher
The Heys Primary School
Whiteacre Road
Ashton-Under-Lyne
Greater Manchester
OL6 9NS

Dear Mr Card

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Heys Primary School, Tameside

Following my visit to your school on 19 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, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, the Chair and one other member of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils. I evaluated the school action plan and scrutinised other key documentation. I also had the opportunity to accompany you on a tour of the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the Year 1 teacher has left, and the temporary teacher for this class will take up this position on a permanent basis from September.

Main findings

Your enthusiasm and energy are infectious and staff and pupils at The Heys are excited about this new journey they are on under your leadership. The pupils I spoke to were very positive and talked about the difference you have made to the school. One middle leader said, 'I can now be the leader I want to be.' This reflects how you have clarified the responsibilities of middle leaders and have provided them with training and time to carry out their roles effectively.

The school's action plan, which has been written in response to the recent inspection, focuses closely on the areas for improvement which were highlighted. It gives a detailed account of actions and intended impact, but it is not always clear who is responsible for leading, monitoring and evaluating these.

Training sessions and coaching of individual teachers are beginning to improve the quality of teaching, but these improvements are not embedded and teaching is not yet consistently good across the school. Recent monitoring of lessons has not focused sufficiently on the progress that all students are making. All teachers are now using a consistent approach to planning and marking. The pupils I spoke to knew their target grades and, more importantly, what they needed to do to achieve them. They could talk very effectively about what and how they are learning.

Tracking of students' progress now takes place every half-term and this information is being used to identify which pupils require extra help in order to make the best possible progress. A focus on writing has already had impact with pupils achieving higher grades in Year 6. There has also been a significant improvement in pupils' phonics skills in Year 2.

The Chair of the Governing Body has been instrumental in bringing about recent improvements in the school and she continues to be very proactive. The Interim Strategic Group challenges you robustly, as well as providing support. Minutes of their meetings show that they drill down to the detail of all aspects of school life. They are involved in monitoring activities and engage in professional conversations with staff. The challenge now is to develop the skills, expertise and capacity of the rest of the governing body as the Interim Strategic Group is phased out in the future.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- sharpen the school action plan so that it is clear who is responsible for leading, monitoring and evaluating the various actions
- ensure that lesson monitoring focuses on the progress that pupils are making
- develop the skills, expertise and capacity of the full governing body.

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 school continues to receive very strong and effective support from the local authority and there is a clear shared vision based on mutual professional respect. The local authority representative is an influential member of the Interim Strategic Group and the school benefits from his expertise. You are continuing to receive this effective support while you are on your journey to becoming a good school.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne

Her Majesty's Inspector