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25 June 2013

Mark Bradley
Southdown Junior School
Mount Road
Southdown
Bath
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Dear Mr Bradley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Southdown Junior School

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 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, the Chair of the Governing Body, your literacy coordinator and a representative of the local authority. You gave me a tour of the school and I was able to see some of the children's work on display. I looked at recent governing body minutes and evaluated the schools' plans for improvement.

As a result of my serious concerns about the insufficiency of the actions being taken by the school, I attended the Governing Body meeting on the 20 June 2013 so that I could feedback my concerns to the full governing body.

Context

The school continues to be led by an acting headteacher while the governing body pursue a hard federation with the neighbouring infant school.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas that require improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement.

The governing body are not paying enough attention to pupil progress and have not taken the inspection findings seriously enough. Since the inspection governors have not met to discuss the published report and have not communicated the finding of the report openly to parents. Although the governing body recognise that they need training they have not been proactive in seeking this support and have relied upon the local authority to organise the governing body review recommended by the inspection.

The schools improvement plan is not sharply focused on actions that will address the areas that need improvement. Monitoring and evaluation is not robust enough within the plan and senior leaders are too complacent about the quality of teaching in the school.

The governing body should take immediate action to:

- robustly hold the school to account for the progress pupils make and the delivery of the improvement plans
- introduce a governor action plan that addresses the areas for improvement identified in the governing body review
- consider the membership of the governing body and seek out new members who will strengthen the ability to drive improvement
- ensure the acting headteacher is provided with appropriate, professional support
- ensure the improvement plan focuses on the areas identified for improvement by the inspection and that monitoring and evaluation are clear and measurable

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. I will contact the school during the autumn term to enquire as to the progress being made overall and by the governing body. I will make at least one further visit to the school before its next inspection.

It is recommended that senior leaders and governors attend the school improvement seminar organised by Ofsted.

External support

The local authority is providing an appropriate level of support but this has yet to impact on outcomes for pupils. The local authority has worked with the acting

headteacher on self-evaluation, lesson observation and data analysis and they have organised an independent consultant to carry out the review of the governing body recommended by the inspection. This governing body review is to be used to identify further training needs and requirements and the consultant will revisit the school to monitor impact. The school now needs to make better use of the support available from the local authority to secure rapid improvement in the areas identified in the inspection report.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bath and North East Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Phillip Minns
Her Majesty's Inspector