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20 June 2013

Cathy Noble
Headteacher
The Castle Primary School
Barrington Street
Tiverton
EX16 6QR

Dear Mrs Noble

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Castle Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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, your deputy headteacher and special educational needs leader, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions being taken to improve the school. I viewed the school's pupil progress tracker and did a tour of the school with you.

Main findings

Your school action plan focuses on the areas for improvement identified in the recent section 5 inspection. However, it does not help leaders and governors keep a track of how effective action is improving teaching and learning.

Teachers do not routinely plan lessons that encourage pupils to get more involved in their learning and to write at greater length. School leaders have not provided

sufficient guidance on how pupils' skills, including literacy skills, can be improved using this approach. The feedback to teachers you and other leaders provide following lesson observations does not pick out aspects of teaching that could be improved. As a result teaching is not improving fast enough. However you are rightly questioning teachers more precisely about the progress of pupils in their classes.

Since the inspection, more regular checking of pupils' written work by teaching teams has helped to improve teachers' confidence in assessing pupils' progress. As a result interventions for pupils who need extra help with English are better organised, and more now take place during the lesson. The additional training for teachers in teaching letters and sounds has improved pupils' progress in this aspect of reading.

Senior leaders are not clear about their roles and responsibilities for improving the school. This is something you are working with the local authority and governors to rectify, but has slowed improvement since the last inspection. Year group leaders do not provide strong leadership for their teams. As a result improvements to teaching are not widespread despite encouragement for teachers to work more collaboratively.

Governors are clear about the need to improve the school's performance. They have not yet discussed the way they monitor and evaluate the school's work. They have stabilised the school's finances and separated out the additional funding for those in receipt of the pupils premium. How this is spent and measuring the impact is one of their pressing priorities.

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

- implement plans to re-structure the senior leadership team. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all leaders and managers, including governors in judging the impact of actions on improving school performance
- put in place a robust programme of checking on learning so that barriers to improving teaching can be removed
- seek help from other schools in establishing a programme of lessons that inspire pupils, particularly boys, and raise expectations.

HMI was unable to meet with the full governing body and will return to do so as soon as possible.

External support

The local authority has made a strong commitment to supporting the school to become good. They should continue with plans to provide support for the headteacher from a national leader of education.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector