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25 June 2013

Ruth Elenor
Headteacher
Membury Primary School
Membury
Axminster
Devon
EX13 7AF

Dear Mrs Elenor,

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Membury Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 you, teaching and support staff, pupils and members of the Governing Body. I also held telephone conversations with your school improvement partner and a local leader of education to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated to see how this is having an impact on improving teaching and outcomes for pupils overall.

Context

Governors are continuing to explore the possibility of federating with other schools.

Main findings

You have begun to amend your school improvement plan in line with the recommendations made in the s5 inspection report. Where weak teaching was identified you have begun to address this and, with the support of external partners, are putting in place a programme of support and training for staff.

You have introduced plans to monitor the progress of pupils more frequently and use this information to help improve teaching and learning. The most recent information on pupils indicates that those with special educational needs are making improved progress. However, further work needs to be done in this area. In particular, the system to track pupils' progress does not provide enough challenge, especially for the more able pupils. For example, the most recent information on pupils' reading attainment does not show aspirational end of year targets for each pupil. Consequently, some high achieving pupils have not made the progress expected of them this year. This pattern is the same for English and mathematics.

Teaching and support staff are very willing to engage with the headteacher and external partners in the improvement process. However, the improvement plan lacks the detail necessary for leaders and governors to hold the school rigorously to account. The plan is not easy to follow and targets and success criteria also lack focus. This makes monitoring of the improvement plan and showing progress difficult to evidence.

Members of the governing body were able to explain how the more regular updates on pupils' progress and the work of the school is helping them to secure a better understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This is enabling them to ask more challenging questions of senior leaders. Governors have benefited from a range of additional training. They are committed to securing good teaching and learning and a sustainable future for the school. To strengthen this process even further the governing body is to undertake an external review of its working practices.

In conclusion, senior leaders and governors are beginning to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- share the school improvement plan with staff and governors so that all are clear about their roles and responsibilities in improving the school and by when actions need to be completed and evaluated
- set aspirational targets for all pupils at the beginning of the new academic year in reading, writing and mathematics, monitor their progress frequently in order to provide appropriate support and challenge

- make sure that progress in implementing school improvement plans are considered at all governing body meetings.

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 wisely drawing on the expertise of external partners to provide for your own professional development and to develop the skills and confidence of staff and governors. In addition you have introduced a programme for your staff of visits to other good and outstanding providers.

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

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector