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28 June 2013

Mrs Colleen Jackson
Headteacher
Sandal Primary School
West Lane
Baildon
Shipley
West Yorkshire
BD17 5DH

Dear Mrs Jackson

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Sandal Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged as having serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in January 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Strategic Director – Children's Services for Bradford.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics in Years 1 to 6, so that it is at least good by ensuring that:
 - work is closely matched to pupils' needs so that all are able to make consistently good progress
 - more effective use is made of lesson time to enable pupils to learn quickly
 - pupils are given precise information about how they can improve
 - help from support staff is always of good quality.

- Raise achievement in mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers receive training to enable them to have a good understanding of how to teach mathematics and develop pupils' numeracy skills in other subjects
 - pupils are given significantly more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems and to understand the relevance of mathematics to everyday life
 - teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in mathematics are accurate so that pupils who are falling behind in their learning can be quickly identified and supported
 - pupils who find learning more difficult and those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are given additional, good quality help to ensure that they make good progress.

- Improve the quality of leadership, management and governance by ensuring that:
 - checks on the quality of teaching in mathematics are more rigorous and accurate
 - there is strong and effective leadership of mathematics
 - the school's evaluation of its performance is more accurate and improvement plans are more sharply focused on raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching in mathematics.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 27 June 2013

Evidence

During my inspection I observed teaching and learning in Years 1 to 5 in the school. All of these observations were conducted jointly with the executive headteacher and the headteacher designate. I scrutinised documents relating to the school's work and governance and, together with the acting deputy, I scrutinised a sample of pupils' mathematics books. I met with senior leaders, subject leaders in mathematics, the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor and a representative of the local authority. I also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and talked to pupils informally during the inspection.

Context

Since my last visit, The headteacher has retired, the deputy headteacher has become the acting head of school, the assistant headteacher has become the acting deputy, a senior teacher has become acting assistant headteacher. The school has appointed a headteacher who takes up post in September 2013 but is already working in school alongside the executive headteacher. Two teachers have resigned and are leaving at the end of the summer term and two teachers are currently on long-term absence. A new local authority governor has joined the governing body which now has its full complement of governors.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders have been diligent in putting into place systems and structures to check the work of the school. They have a realistic view of what has been achieved and what improvements are still required. There are more frequent observations of the quality of teaching and careful moderation of assessment information in partnership with the local authority. Pupils' work is checked against the levels awarded by teachers and robust discussions take place where there are inaccuracies. All leaders receive training and support through partnerships with the local authority and the partner school led by the executive headteacher. This is leading to a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. However, the roles and accountability of middle leaders are still at an early stage of development and the extent to which they are held accountable for driving improvements needs further development.

Individual programmes of support have been put in place to support teaching and this is beginning to show some improvement in the quality of teaching observed. Nevertheless, leaders are under no illusion that there is still further to go until teaching is of the quality and consistency required for it to be good.

In March 2012, an audit of the governing body found weaknesses in the recording of information and the levels of attendance at training necessary for governors to fulfil their roles. The governors had drafted an action plan to tackle these issues. They have ensured that meetings are recorded more accurately and have appointed a clerk for this purpose. They have established two new committees and are now better placed to oversee the improvements in the school. Opportunities to monitor the work of the school for themselves have proved challenging but they now have a clearer view of how this can be achieved. They accept there is more to be done to ensure that they hold all leaders to account.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Current data indicate that pupils' attainment in mathematics has improved this year and nearly all pupils in Year 6 have made expected progress and many have made better progress.
- In lessons pupils are more active in their learning and they are being given more interesting things to do. There has been a whole-school focus on ensuring that pupils develop the skills to use and apply their mathematical understanding. Time has been dedicated to this; however, leaders are right in their view that this now needs to be embedded as a feature of everyday practice within mathematics lessons.
- Work to secure teachers' assessment of pupils' work has improved. Pupils are involved in keeping track of what they can do. Work with the partner school and training in assessing pupils' progress has led to greater accuracy in teachers' assessments.
- Teachers have worked with the partner school in introducing a personal skills record for each pupil. Support for teachers to improve aspects of teaching is in place. Leaders know there is more to do to ensure teachers' understanding of effective teaching is developed to the required level.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- There remain weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge. As a result, some of the work pupils are given does not always build precisely on what pupils have learned or tackle gaps and misconceptions in their learning.
- The marking of pupils' work is improving across the school. However, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work showed that pupils do not have opportunities to respond to or address the feedback they are now given. In too many cases the teachers' comments are not making an effective contribution to pupils' better progress.
- Although pupils are more engaged through practical tasks and activities, leaders are clear that there needs to be more focus on ensuring that this is precisely matched to pupils' individual needs. For example, in a lesson involving measuring, the more complex activity required pupils to measure simpler and shorter distances and the simpler task required pupils to measure trickier longer distances. While the school has worked on this aspect of teaching, there are still examples of lessons where all pupils are given the same activity without consideration of their different learning needs.

External support

The school has benefited from a range of support from the local authority and the partnership with a local school. In particular, the leadership of the executive headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about improvements to the organisation of lessons and systems for monitoring the quality of teaching. Moderation from local authority officers has confirmed the security of teachers' externally reported assessments and rigorous challenge has been given to governors through an external audit of the governing body.