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1 July 2013

Louise Wood
Headteacher
Barrow Hedges Primary School
Harbury Road
Carshalton
SM5 4LA

Dear Mrs Wood

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Barrow Hedges Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 July 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior and middle leaders and a group of eight teachers. I held a meeting with the Chair of the Governing Body, the Vice Chair and three other governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan and related documentation. I carried out a tour of the school with you, to see it at work.

Context

You returned from maternity leave just after the last inspection. An extra governor joined the governing body.

Main findings

You, senior leaders and governors have responded very constructively to the findings of the last inspection. In response to the inspection recommendations you have developed a good quality action plan to tackle all the areas identified as needing improvement. This runs to the end of the summer term 2013 and has quantified milestones to track success and makes clear the role of governors in monitoring school improvement.

You and your deputy headteacher carried out, with the support of local authority consultants, a rigorous evaluation of the quality of teaching in the school just after the inspection. This had the dual purpose of establishing a baseline for the quality of teaching to measure improvement and also establishing necessary professional development for staff. From this process whole staff training on improving marking was rapidly put in place. Subsequent work scrutiny has revealed a big improvement in the quality of feedback, with more pupils responding to marking and making better progress in their learning as a result. Pupils speaking to governors have reported how beneficial they find the new ways of marking.

You, senior leaders and governors became aware that there had been too much focus on pupils' attainment and too little on their progress in the past. This was true for disabled students and those with special educational needs. As a result, too many pupils were identified as having additional needs and extra help was not always targeted correctly. Leaders have reviewed the special educational needs register and begun to target support more effectively to accelerate pupils' progress. A range of training has also been delivered for teaching staff around planning to ensure better progress for all groups of pupils. This has focused on ensuring that assessment information is used well to plan work at the right level of difficulty for the range of abilities. As a result, teachers are much more aware of the progress of their pupils. A second evaluation of teaching, following training, has seen the proportion of good or better teaching rise significantly, albeit from quite a low base. Teaching staff report that their morale has improved because they see the results of their hard work reflected in better feedback from lesson observations.

You have focused, quite correctly, on improving the basics of teaching and learning, and simplifying the school's procedures to make them more useful. For example, the half termly pattern of governors' meetings have been changed to match the school's assessment pattern and make monitoring of pupils' progress by governors more efficient. There is not yet a clear consensus between school leaders, the local authority and governors about when the school will be securely good. You know that new improvement plans need to be developed and based around this timeline. You recognise that changes to appraisal and performance management for September 2013 present an opportunity to tie together new improvement plans with teachers' performance targets.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- work with governors and the local authority to develop a consensus about when the school will be good and develop new improvement plans around this timeline
- ensure that new appraisal systems closely link teachers' performance targets to improvement plans.

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 local authority recognises that it was not rigorous enough in checking on the performance of the school before the last inspection. However, since the inspection the local authority has given a good deal of high quality support to the school. Senior leaders have found this very beneficial in raising the quality of teaching. Links are being formed with a local Teaching School to participate in action research in the autumn term on improving the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector