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Mrs Rosina Lee
Headteacher
Sneyd Green Primary School
Sneyd Street
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Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST6 2NS

Dear Mrs Lee

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sneyd Green Primary School, Stoke-On-Trent

Following my visit to your school on 12 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, representatives from the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated, a number of short visits were made to lessons and school documentation was examined.

Context

Since the last inspection, three teachers are leaving at the end of term and two have been appointed. One governor has resigned and three new governors appointed. A new business manager has also been appointed to the school.

Main findings

The school was inspected in March 2013 and since that time you and senior leaders have taken steps to improve aspects of the school. As the Chair of the Governing Body stated, 'It has sharply focused the need for consistency in teaching and learning,' and that 'it focused the need to be more sure of the effectiveness of strategies.' There is a willingness to improve and optimism that the school can quickly become good.

There is an action plan in place to address the areas for improvement. The plan includes actions, realistic timescales, success criteria, systems for monitoring and measurable milestones. There is a plan in place to improve rates of attendance. However, this plan lacks some detail and could be tweaked to have greater impact.

Steps have already been taken to improve the school. Following an initial disappointment about the inspection judgement, leaders have now devised plans to get the school to good. Everyone is confident that the school will quickly improve. You and the deputy headteacher understand the need for greater consistency across all aspects of the school.

There is a focus across the school on improving teaching and learning. All teachers have received individual feedback following lesson observations and those who require improvement have received support plans to help them improve. The procedures for support are rigorous and clearly outline expectations of what is needed to develop the quality of teaching. You intend to provide all teachers with support plans to improve the quality of teaching. This will ensure all teachers have training which is adapted according to individual need. There is now a better link between the quality of teaching, performance management and the standards teachers should achieve.

The teaching of spelling now has a significant priority and plans are in place to develop phonics and spelling through a new approach. There is a greater focus on improving pupils' basic skills across all subjects and the curriculum has been reviewed to give a greater focus on developing skills in reading, writing and mathematics. A list of non-negotiables can be seen in every classroom which gives clarity to what is expected from every pupil in writing and mathematics.

Developing the role of middle leaders was identified as an area for improvement. Internal appointments have resulted in changes to leadership roles for English and mathematics. There is a developing clarity of roles and responsibilities and future plans involve a staffing restructuring exercise, to better meet the needs of the school. Phase leaders have been given increased levels of accountability and there are higher expectations of the difference they should make to their areas of responsibility. Training needs for middle leaders have been identified and plans are in place for their roles to develop further.

There is a new marking policy in place and the impact of this has been monitored. Pupils are now given 'fix it' time where they are expected to respond to the teacher's marking. You can already see improvements in how teachers mark pupils' work, but you are also aware that inconsistencies remain.

The ways in which teachers assess pupils' work is improving. There is now an agreed system in place to assess reading, writing and mathematical skills. You are confident that procedures will lead to a greater understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses but also will give an analysis of what class teachers need to teach next.

You are aware that attendance rates remain a concern. You have increased the support from the education welfare officer through the local authority. This will ensure better analysis and monitoring of absence rates. There is now a greater focus on pupils attending lessons punctually.

The governing body is focused on supporting and challenging leaders in the quest to get to good. A new governor has intentionally been appointed to the governing body with an educational background. Governors have carried out a skills audit and are developing a committee structure according to the findings. Governors are now linking more closely with subject leaders to gain a better picture of what is happening in school. While committees meet to monitor the school's performance, there is no committee that directly monitors the school's successes in the action plan.

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:

- develop plans to improve attendance
- develop action plans to support all teachers in improving their teaching
- ensure the governing body develops a way to rigorously monitor leaders actions against agreed areas for improvement.

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 has facilitated links with other schools, to provide support to Sneyd Green. These links are well thought through. For example, one school is providing support to improve teaching and learning and develop the role of governors, while another is developing leadership and attendance. You are appreciative of the support and feel it will make a positive contribution to school improvement. The local authority attends school and regularly monitors the school's performance. Additional support is provided through the education welfare officer to make a difference to attendance rates.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Stoke-On-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward

Her Majesty's Inspector