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16 July 2013

Miss Ann Marshall
Headteacher
Wharnccliffe Side Primary School
Brightholmlee Lane
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S35 0DD

Dear Miss Marshall

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wharnccliffe Side Primary School, Sheffield

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The action plan and other documents presented by the school were evaluated. The headteacher took HMI on a tour of the school.

Context

A new middle leader for lower school will start in January 2014. Temporary arrangements are in place to cover this role in the autumn term. Another new teacher will begin a one year contract in September 2013.

Main findings

Following the inspection the headteacher has worked swiftly and with enthusiasm to address the areas for improvement. As a result there is a higher level of challenge for both staff and pupils.

There is a sharp focus on improving teaching and learning. Teachers and leaders have visited other schools to observe good practice and there has been training in staff meetings linked to the areas for improvement, particularly in writing and mathematics. Extra time is given to extended writing for real purposes and there is a drive to improve pupils' mathematical skills.

The new marking and feedback policy has improved both the frequency and style of marking. Marking is more thorough and identifies areas for improvement. The policy needs to be embedded so that pupils have opportunities to respond to the feedback consistently. The local authority representative and an external consultant have validated the school's evidence that there is improved marking, more writing at length and better presentation in books.

A very rigorous monitoring and evaluation cycle is in place. Teaching and learning are monitored by daily by 'drop-ins', regular coaching observations and half termly performance management observations. All of these observations are recorded with feedback to teachers to help them improve. The judgements of senior leaders have been checked by external consultants and the impact of the actions to improve teaching and learning can be seen in the increasing amount of good or better teaching. There is a very strong system to challenge and hold teachers to account through weekly supervision meetings with a senior leader. Pupils' work in books is also reviewed every week. This cycle will be refined in September and it is important that the rapid drive for improvement continues and that the school works towards more outstanding teaching.

The review of governance is underway in partnership with a National Leader of Governance. The governing body has plans for highly structured monitoring of the action plan and of the school's work. It is important that this monitoring starts immediately in September.

The headteacher with the support of senior leaders and governors is taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that actions to improve writing and mathematics continue so that all pupils make good progress
- continue the rapid drive for improvement so that more teaching is outstanding
- embed the marking and feedback policy so that it is used consistently, with all pupils given time to respond to feedback
- ensure that the governors' monitoring programme is rigorous and starts quickly in September.

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 representative has been helpful in supporting and challenging the headteacher and in signposting schools which are examples of good practice. The school has used the expertise very well, with teachers visiting the schools to observe good teaching and using the pupils' books from an outstanding school to look at effective writing. The school has also employed external consultants to support improvements in teaching and learning and mathematics. A National Leader of Governance is working with the governing body.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

Her Majesty's Inspector