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11 July 2013

Nic Gordon
Headteacher
Avishayes Community Primary School
Fairway Rise
Chard
TA20 1NS

Dear Mrs Gordon,

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Avishayes Community Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 11 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, and representatives from the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy improvement plan, minutes from governing body meetings and support plans for staff were evaluated.

Context

A new staffing structure has been established since the inspection in May 2013. A special educational needs co-ordinator has been appointed. A Key Stage 2 teacher has been appointed. One teacher has reduced their working hours to three days a week. The Key Stage 2 leader now leads teaching and learning across the academy. Teaching assistant roles have been reallocated. Two new teaching assistants have been appointed and one is leaving at the end of term.

Main findings

The headteacher's targeted action following the recent inspection is bringing about improvements in performance for those teachers who are not yet consistently good.

Detailed support plans, including weekly monitoring and mentoring meetings, are improving the quality of lesson planning. Visits to outstanding schools and team teaching with stronger teachers, who model effective practice, are raising the pace of lessons and teacher's expectations. A strength of this model is the need for teachers to analyse effective practice, reflect on their own teaching and provide succinct action points for when they return to class. Recent lesson observations carried out by senior leaders indicate that planned activities are now meeting the different range of pupils' needs more carefully. This is improving pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons further. In the Reception class, a review of the learning environment has resulted in more definition between formal and informal learning areas. This, combined with on-going training, is helping to deliver more targeted sessions such as the teaching of phonics and bringing about rapid improvements to children's achievements.

More frequent pupil progress meetings conducted by senior leaders is enabling earlier intervention for those pupils who are identified of being at risk of falling behind. This is holding staff to account more rigorously for the performance of pupils in their class. For younger pupils the approach of early identification, mixed with additional activities such as nurture groups or forest school experiences, is effectively tackling emotional and social barriers. This combination of approaches is effective in helping prepare pupils to be ready to learn later in their academy life.

The Governing Body produced an action plan as a matter of urgency following the inspection. The plan provides a clear set of actions to strengthen governance. Subject leaders are reporting more frequently to governors on their areas of responsibility. Weekly meetings between the chair of governors and headteacher are keeping governors abreast of current developments. Strong strategic decisions to change the staffing structure and appoint new experienced teachers have strengthened the academy's potential to become good. However, whilst monitoring activities and visits to the academy take place, governors recognise these are yet to be carried out in a structured and systematic way by all governors. This hinders the ability of the governing body to closely track the success of the academy development 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:

- senior leaders and the chair of the Governing Body to attend an Ofsted seminar 'Getting to Good'
- improve the academy development plan by establishing an additional evaluation column. The plan should set out a systematic evaluation cycle by the governing body and/or other external partners.
- ensure that all governors play a part in planned and structured visits to gather first hand evidence of work at the academy

- the academy to arrange for a termly external evaluation of progress towards the development plan priorities.

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 academy has worked hard to establish a valued relationship with some services of the local authority. Support for vulnerable pupils at risk of exclusion in other settings through assistance with transition arrangements and staff training are well-developed and a strength of the relationship. External training sought by the academy for the teaching of phonics and 'mathematics in context' is improving teaching in all year groups. The headteacher recognises that as a stand-alone convertor academy, additional termly external evaluations would provide a helpful, objective view of their progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Local Authority for Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector