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Mrs L Paxton
Headteacher
Oakhill Primary School
Rookery Lane
Oakhill
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 5NS

Dear Mrs Paxton

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

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, a representative from the local authority, a National Leader of Education who is providing you with support, and members of the governing body. We conducted a tour of the school which included a brief meeting with the pastoral support team leader. I looked at a sample of pupils' work and considered the quality of marking. I evaluated your school improvement plans. I considered your most recent data on pupils' achievement and attendance, and records of monitoring of teaching.

Context

The governing body has made three appointments who will take up their posts in September 2013. A newly qualified teacher will teach pupils in Year 3; an experienced teacher will teach pupils in Year 2 following the retirement of the existing post holder; and a temporary teacher has been appointed to teach pupils in Year 1.

Two assistant headteachers will join you as members of the senior leadership team following the promotion of the existing deputy headteacher to a headship position in another school. The governing body has arranged for pupils in Year 6 to be taught in two smaller classes from September 2013.

Main findings

Since the inspection, you have swiftly devised and started to implement your action plan. This is sharply focused upon addressing the issues identified for improvement.

Teachers have responded positively to professional development activities. You have raised teachers' expectations of what can be achieved, by enabling them to observe outstanding provision in schools which are in a similar context to your own. You have focused coaching on increasing opportunities for pupils to progress at a faster rate in lessons. Your review of marking and subsequent checking shows that pupils are responding to teachers' comments and they know what they have to do next to improve their work. As a result of these developments, the quality of teaching is improving.

You have strengthened leadership through embedding your system for tracking the progress and attainment of pupils. You are now using the information to underpin your judgements about the quality of teaching alongside information gathered from visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupil's work. Your tracking reveals that pupils in all year groups have made accelerated rates of progress during the summer term.

Governors are using the information about pupils' progress to check their achievements more carefully through the newly formed 'scrutiny' committee. This has strengthened governors' ability to make strategic decisions. For instance, they have re-organised arrangements of the teaching of pupils in Year 6 from September 2013, so they are taught in smaller groups. Governors acknowledge that they are not gathering enough first-hand evidence regarding the quality of teaching to complement the information which is provided by the school.

The pastoral support team have worked more closely with parents and carers in order to stress the importance of their children attending school regularly. As a result, the rates of attendance and punctuality of pupils have improved.

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:

- ensure that governors collect more first-hand evidence about the work of the school to supplement that which is provided and hold the school's leaders to account more effectively for the school's performance.

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 adviser is monitoring closely the progress of the school and provides good levels of challenge and support. She has brokered additional support from a National Leader of Education. This support has been sharply focused on improving the skills of individual teachers. Teachers have responded positively to guidance and are applying aspects which have been identified for improvement in their practice.

Governors have benefitted from an external review of their work. This has helped them to sharpen their checking on how well the school is performing through the setting up of the 'scrutiny' committee.

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

David Carter

Her Majesty's Inspector