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9 July 2013

Mrs Jill Hodgson
Headteacher
Bearpark Primary School
Colliery Road
Bearpark
Durham
DH7 7AU

Dear Mrs Hodgson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bearpark Primary School, Durham

Following my visit to your school on 8 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, meetings were held with you, middle managers, ten members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority's education development service. I observed two part-lessons with you and evaluated a range of documents. These included the improvement plan, recent records on the quality of teaching in school, reports to the governing body since the inspection and records on pupils' progress in lessons over the past year. I also reviewed pupils' English and mathematics books.

Context

There have been no significant changes in the school's organisation since the inspection.

Main findings

You, governors and middle managers wasted no time in developing and then implementing an action plan designed to move the school to good within the year. The plan has some clear and measurable targets, particularly for pupils' achievement targets for the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. However, you are aware that in the haste in defining key actions, not all targets are precise enough; particularly in holding staff to account for the progress of pupils in year groups not involved in end of Key Stage tests or assessments. You are rightly

refining the plan to rectify this. Teachers and teaching assistants have benefitted from training that is helping them to better understand what good and outstanding teaching is. They have had opportunities to learn from best practice by observing teaching in Framwellgate Primary, a local outstanding school. More training is planned for next term. Time limited action plans have been put in place to move the teaching that requires improvement to good quickly and plans will be reviewed at the end of July. Evidence from your observations of teaching, reviews of actions in the action plan, tracking information on pupils' progress in lessons, from scrutiny of pupils' books and our observations of teaching during the visit show that since the inspection pupils are generally making faster progress in lessons. The quality of teaching is improving as teachers begin to embed their learning from training and development activities already undertaken. Assessment information shows more needs to be done however to hasten pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4.

Rapid changes to performance management arrangements for staff have ensured a sharper focus on pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and significantly more involvement of middle managers in driving the necessary improvements across the school. Middle managers speak with conviction about how they value their increased roles and responsibilities and how they are now held to account more rigorously by yourself and governors for their roles in improving teaching and in hastening pupils' progress.

Governors quickly changed the way they work to make sure they have a stronger role in checking what you; middle managers and teachers are doing to ensure the school is good within the year. They have become much more involved in monitoring the school's work first-hand, through visits and through the use of a broader range of information on how well all pupils are doing in class. For example they have recently conducted a book scrutiny of pupils' work with you and now attend pupil progress meetings to make sure that any child at-risk of underachieving is identified and that actions are put in place to rectify matters. They quickly secured local authority support to better-understand pupil progress and performance data such as Ofsted's school data dashboard.

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:

- tighten up the success criteria /targets in the post Ofsted action plan, to ensure all teachers are fully held to account for the progress their pupils are making.

I will revisit the school in the autumn term to carry out further joint lesson observations and to check whether current improvements in pupils' progress in lessons is being sustained and built upon. 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

A local authority Education Development Partner was already supporting you following your appointment in January. Involvement has increased following the inspection by the support from an additional school improvement officer. Together these officers have provided training to you, middle leaders, teachers and governors which is supporting improvements in leadership and in the quality of teaching. You have also bought support from local authority English, mathematics and Early Years Foundation Stage advisers. This support is making a

difference to the quality of provision in the Reception class, in the promotion of the skills needed by the mathematics and English leaders so they can monitor improvements in their subject and in their wider leadership roles in school. Links with Framwellgate Primary school, are helping teachers to learn from best classroom practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector