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17 July 2013

Diane Reddish
Brackensdale Infant School
Walthamstow Drive
Mackworth Estate
Derby
DE22 4BS

Dear Mrs Reddish

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brackensdale Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and your staff, including the assistant headteacher, leaders of English and mathematics, and the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage. I also met with a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body. I considered your monitoring of teaching and learning, and your most recent data on the attendance and achievement of pupils. I evaluated your school improvement plan and those of the leaders of English and mathematics. We conducted a tour of the school. I looked at samples of pupils' work and considered the quality of marking.

Context

The governing body has appointed a teacher who will work in the additional Reception class. This has been created to accommodate the increase in the number of children entering the school from September 2013. It has also decided to re-organise the classes in Key Stage 1. From September 2013 the four mixed-age classes of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils are being separated so that pupils are taught in two classes per year group.

Main findings

You have introduced a new system to track the progress of pupils more closely. You are using this information to set more challenging targets for individual pupils. However, you are not using the assessment information precisely enough to check that different groups of pupils are achieving as well as they can. Your tracking reveals that pupils in Year 1 need to accelerate their rates of progress in order to achieve your ambition that they attain standards which are above the national average by the time they leave the school.

Leaders of English, mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage have developed their skills in interpreting information about the achievement of pupils. They have used their analysis to produce detailed plans which set out how they intend to improve teaching. Their initial work has resulted in teachers being clearer about the aspects of teaching which have been agreed to be applied in each classroom. As a result, all pupils have more opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences and to develop their skills in handwriting. Pupils read more during lessons and listen to a story every day. Pupils practise mental mathematics daily and are developing their skills to solve problems through the time which is dedicated to undertaking investigations.

Pupils are responding well to the mark scheme which you have recently introduced. Evidence from pupils' work shows that they are clear about what they have to learn next. They are responding to teachers' comments to show how they have improved their work.

You have successfully implemented a range of measures which has improved the attendance and punctuality of pupils.

Governors are visiting the school more frequently in order to check that actions are resulting in improvements. They are aware of the strengths and areas for development in the school's performance and are using this information to make strategic decisions. Governors have re-organised arrangements for the teaching of pupils in Key Stage 1. This is because they have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve.

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:

- make sure that you track the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils so that any gaps between their achievements can be identified and actions drawn up to narrow the gap quickly
- accelerate the progress of pupils in the current Year 1 cohort so that they attain standards which are above the national average by the time they leave the school.

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 has brokered support for the school from an external consultant. This has helped you to focus your attention on drawing up plans which are specifically aimed at tackling the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. You have received effective support from the Education Welfare Officer who has helped you to reduce the amount of persistent absence.

The leader of mathematics has benefited from working with a colleague in a successful school. This has resulted in teaching being more consistent in each class because teachers are responding to the clear guidance about what is expected in their practice. As a result, pupils are having more opportunities to develop their skills in calculating and solving problems.

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

Yours sincerely

David Carter
Her Majesty's Inspector