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13 September 2013

Glenn Atkinson
Headteacher
Hollinswood Primary School
Dale Acre Way
Hollinswood
Telford
TF3 2EP

Dear Mr Atkinson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hollinswood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 September 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking incisive and urgent action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- use the outcomes of recent assessments to diagnose where there are weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding in mathematics and include steps to deal with them in the next version of the raising attainment plan.
- Set out explicitly what needs to be achieved by the pupils in Year 6 by the end of this academic year in order for their achievement to be judged good.
- Consider ways of strengthening the role that the governing body plays in helping to determine the school's strategic direction.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair and vice chair of the Governing Body and three other members, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The raising attainment plan was evaluated. I also toured the school with you and the deputy headteacher, making brief visits to each classroom.

Context

Four members of teaching staff including one deputy headteacher left at the end of the summer term. Five teachers have replaced them. The school now has only one deputy headteacher who is not class-based. Building works continued over the summer break and are almost complete.

Main findings

It is clear that you wasted no time in starting to plan and to take action to make the improvements that will be needed in order to realise the ambition to become a good school as soon as possible. You and your staff, with the support of the local authority, began to draft the raising attainment plan before the inspection report was published. You made sure that staff knew that expectations had been raised. You and senior members of staff completed a number of activities including scrutinising pupils' books and observing teaching and learning in lessons shortly after the end of the inspection. This gave you an informed starting point for identifying where improvements are needed, in addition to the aspects that were highlighted in the inspection report. Interventions were put in place for the remainder of the summer term. These had a positive impact and there was evidence that pupils' progress speeded up.

Further monitoring activities such as observations in classrooms have already begun this term; there is clearly a determination that the school year must get off to a flying start. Teachers new to the school were observed during their first week. You have a good understanding of the aspects of individual teachers' performance that need to improve, as well as the common themes that have emerged. Training for teachers is planned, for example, in the setting of learning objectives and success criteria. The raised expectations for pupils' progress set out in the raising attainment plan are being built in to teachers' performance management targets and teachers are being held more closely to account for the progress of individuals and groups of pupils in their classes. It is also clear that you do not accept teachers' assessments of pupils' learning and progress at face value, but that they are checked by cross-referencing to the work in their books.

Teachers I spoke to were united in their desire to see the school improve quickly. They felt they were working hard, but for a clear purpose. A good, positive climate for change has been established.

You are working closely with a local leader in education and her school, for example you and other senior leaders very recently observed the way she and her senior staff discuss and construct their raising attainment plans. Hollinswood's raising attainment plan is fit for purpose and deals with all of the areas for improvement identified at the recent inspection; however you have recognised that the focus needs to be adjusted as the results of national tests and assessments highlighted that pupils' progress in mathematics was not as strong as in reading and writing. The plan contains challenging targets for teaching and for accelerating pupils' progress, but does not articulate clearly and succinctly what needs to be achieved in order for the school's effectiveness to be judged good, and when this point is expected to be reached.

The governing body has recently completed training in interrogating data about pupils' attainment and progress. Governors share in the determination to improve the school's effectiveness as quickly as possible. They recognise that they may have focused more on operational matters in the past and that there is scope to shift the emphasis more on to the quality of education and future direction for the school.

You agreed to send me a revised version of the raising attainment plan as soon as it is completed. As the action has got off to a swift start and you are receiving good support from the local authority and other partners, I do not intend to make a further visit to the school in the near future.

External support

You are working closely with the local authority and partner schools to good effect. The local authority's recent review of progress gives a thorough and detailed overview of what has been achieved so far and what needs to be done next. Regular joint reviews are scheduled and the progress in making improvements will be carefully scrutinised.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Telford and Wrekin and as below.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector