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9 September 2013

Mrs Toni Beech
Acting Headteacher
Pinfold Street Primary School
Pinfold Street Extension
Darlaston
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WS10 8PU

Dear Mrs Beech

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pinfold Street Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The school development plan and subject action plans were evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including feedback given to teachers following reviews of pupils' work and the latest information about pupils' achievement. During the inspection, you and the assistant headteachers joined me on brief visits to classrooms and to talk to pupils and review their work in mathematics and writing.

Context

Since the last inspection, one teacher has left the school and one teacher has gone on maternity leave. Three teachers have joined the school. At the time of the monitoring inspection the headteacher was on sick leave and you were the acting headteacher.

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:

- include sharper, more measurable criteria and more precise dates in the school development plan so that you and governors can check more closely how well the school is improving
- streamline the school development plan, subject action plans monitoring plans and information about the achievement of different groups of pupils to make more efficient use of these systems to sustain the improvements already made
- make sure governors are more involved with monitoring the impact of actions being taken on the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Main findings

You are responding to the issues raised in the recent inspection with determination. In the absence of the headteacher, you and the assistant headteachers have kept a clear focus on improving pupils' achievement. You have provided training for the teaching of mathematics and to improve how well teachers use questions to challenge pupils and check their learning. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the recently introduced 'Passport' approach to learning number facts by heart. The coordinator for English has planned appropriate training to improve how teachers teach writing. You have set clear expectations for how teachers should mark pupils' work.

You and other senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' work. Feedback to teachers shows them what they are doing well and where improvements are required. You do not check soon enough whether these improvements have been made. Your monitoring evidence and visits made to classrooms during the inspection show that some teachers are using the agreed approaches consistently. Pupils in these classes are making better progress than at the time of the last inspection. Some teachers are not following agreed policies. This is holding back the progress of pupils in these classes.

The revised school improvement plan includes suitable actions to improve the quality of teaching, the attendance of pupils and the work of senior leaders. The plan does

not always have measurable success criteria or precise dates when actions will be carried out or reviewed.

The governing body requested a review of governance from the local authority. The earliest date available for this is in December. In lieu of an earlier review date, governors have sought information from successful governing bodies and from published materials to help them gain a better understanding of their role. Governors say they feel more confident to challenge senior leaders. Leaders say governors are beginning to ask more questions. Governors do not routinely or systematically check that the school development plan is making a difference to the achievement of different groups of pupils.

You now make it clear to parents that they must not take their children on holiday in term time. You also follow up all absences immediately. Some pupils who have previously been absent often are now coming to school more regularly. Nevertheless attendance rates remain low.

There is evidence that you have introduced a number of ways to keep parents informed and involve them more in their children's education, including: launching a school newspaper; installing a television loop for parents to talk to the school without having to come into the building; and arranging for meetings with parents to be held outside school if needed. These approaches are beginning to encourage more parents to join in with school life.

External support

Support provided by the local authority has given the assistant headteachers and subject coordinators a better understanding of their role. These leaders now contribute to the checks made on the quality of teaching and pupils' work. Teachers say they value the additional support commissioned from local authority and independent consultants and that they feel more confident as a result of the training and advice received.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector