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10 September 2013

Mrs S Barrett
Headteacher
Crumpsall Lane Primary School
Crumpsall
Manchester
Lancashire
M8 5SR

Dear Mrs Barrett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Crumpsall Lane Primary School, Manchester

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 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 May 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:

- Ensure that the new look senior leadership team is effective in raising the expectations of all those associated with the school.
- Make stronger links with good and outstanding schools as a means of learning from and sharing good practice.
- Ensure that the good practice of some teachers and other adults is consistently applied by all as a means of ensuring every pupil is challenged to do their best, for example through the use of high quality marking.
- Refine the school's development plan to include clearer measures of success which relate to improving outcomes for pupils.

Evidence

During the visit I held meetings with you, the associate deputy headteacher, two teachers, group of pupils from Year 6, the Chair of Governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I took part in a learning walk with you and observed teaching and learning in all year groups. I scrutinised samples of work from pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 along with a range of other documentation provided by you.

Context

Since the last inspection changes have been made to senior leadership team. An associate deputy headteacher has been appointed on a temporary basis for one year. Two new assistant headteachers have been appointed on a permanent basis; one took up post on 1 September 2013 while the other will join the school on 1 October 2013. Staff changes elsewhere in the school have been minimal but have included the appointment of a newly qualified teacher and a teaching assistant. All appointments, other than that of the associate deputy headteacher, have been to fill vacancies made since the last inspection. Teaching has been strengthened following the decision of a previous assistant headteacher, seen as a strong teacher, to resign from leadership duties in order to concentrate on classroom teaching.

Main findings

It is clear that accelerating the progress made by pupils at Crumpsall Lane Primary School is your key priority. Following the last inspection you have taken quick and decisive action to strengthen the leadership team as a means of raising expectations and eradicating inconsistency in teaching. The introduction of an associate deputy headteacher and the appointment of two new assistant headteachers has allowed you to concentrate your efforts on the quality of teaching. As a result teaching has improved, there is a consistent approach to classroom management and teachers are asking challenging questions, especially of the more able pupils.

There is an increased urgency to improving the quality of teaching. Leaders spend more time monitoring teaching and giving developmental feedback where required. Teachers agreed that the move to more regular, short and focussed lesson observations by leaders is helpful in improving their teaching skills. For example, lesson observation feedback, coupled with the sharing of ideas in a staff meeting, led a teacher to introduce a 'reflection area' into her classroom as a means of developing pupil independence. As a result pupils were observed working in designated areas discussing their reading books. These pupils were not only improving their subject knowledge but also developing independent learning skills.

A sample of pupils' exercise books demonstrated a consistent approach to the marking of pupils' work by teachers. All marking clearly explains to the pupils what they have done well and also how they can improve next time. Some marking by teachers is contributing to the increased progress of some pupils especially when it gives them an additional challenge in the form of an extra question. Pupils said they like being given an added task along with the

time at the beginning of the next lesson to complete it because, ‘..it tests us’ and ‘...makes us think harder’. This challenge has raised expectations by encouraging the pupils to push themselves further; leaders should ensure this practice is followed in all classes.

Teaching assistants have contributed to the improvement in teaching since the last inspection. The use of teaching assistants has been reviewed to take account of their individual strengths. As a result support for pupils is having even more impact on learning. Pupils were quick to point out that teaching is better because they get more help when they need it. In a mathematics lesson a teaching assistant was observed working with a group of pupils using open ended questions to help them understand the process of division. The pupils were making progress and beginning to understand how to ‘carry’ when dividing larger numbers.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

Extrenal Support

The Governing Body has played an integral part in the push to raise expectations and promote the consistency of good practice, especially through its use of funds to allow the appointment of an associate deputy headteacher. However, governors also recognise the need to be more involved and skilful in their analysis of data as a means of challenging leaders to increase the pace of improvement. The Governing Body has arranged for governors to receive training and support in the use of data. It is too early to assess the impact of this support on either the work of governors or progress within the school.

The local authority has taken positive steps to support the school to improve. Since the inspection three teachers have been supported to take part in an initiative to improve their teaching skills, senior leaders have taken part in a seminar aimed at supporting the school in becoming good. Quality assurance monitoring visits by local authority officers have also been planned.

Additional funds have been made available by the local authority to joint fund the appointment of an associate deputy headteacher and a commitment has been made to seek a further nine days of support from a Local Leader of Education.

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

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw

Her Majesty's Inspector