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12 September 2013

Philippa Otton
Headteacher
Laburnum Grove Junior School, Bognor Regis
Laburnum Grove
Bognor Regis
PO22 9HT

Dear Ms Otton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Laburnum Grove Junior School, Bognor Regis

Following my visit to your school on 12 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. However, not all actions to improve the school have been sufficiently incisive and school leaders have not planned clearly how they will evaluate the impact of improvements to teaching. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that impact of actions taken to improve teaching are measured in terms of gains in pupils' progress
- improve the quality of day-to-day teaching through more rigorous monitoring, following up on any teaching that is less than good, setting clear, measurable targets for staff and pupil performance.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, three members of the school leadership team, six governors and a representative from the local authority. I evaluated the school's action plan. I went on a tour of the school site and visited all classes.

Main findings

Following the section 5 inspection that judged the school to require improvement, immediate action was taken to enable senior leaders to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress more effectively. Middle and senior leaders have been allocated more time to check teaching, analyse progress and support teachers with their work. This has already had a positive impact on the school. There is a new and improved literacy policy in place which aims to raise standards in grammar, spelling and punctuation. School leaders have ensured that pupils have daily opportunities to practise their handwriting and there are clear expectations that teachers will assess pupils' reading more regularly and set challenging and focused reading targets.

The leader for mathematics has modelled good practice by demonstrating inspiring teaching to encourage teachers to plan more challenging mathematics lessons. School leaders can point to more frequent opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills independently to solve problems. Teachers and teaching assistants have attended necessary training intended to improve their questioning and have also begun to make effective use of strategies, such as 'talk to your partner' and 'think, pair, share', to promote pupils' full participation in lessons. A set of clear guiding principles for marking has been established although it is too soon to measure the impact on pupils' progress.

Pupils' progress is now tracked more thoroughly and efficiently every half term. School leaders have introduced the use of average points scores based on national curriculum levels in order to identify more precisely how much progress pupils are making.

Since the section 5 inspection the headteacher has spent more time evaluating the quality of teaching and has recognised that effective monitoring includes not only single lesson observations, but also analyses of pupils' progress and scrutinies of pupils' work. The headteacher has correctly realised that she needs to insist on higher expectations of pupils and take firmer action when teaching is less than good. Plans are in place to link teachers' and teaching assistants' performance management targets more closely to the overall school improvement plan.

Following the external review governors are now much clearer about their roles and responsibilities and have been alerted to their weaknesses, particularly their willingness to accept too readily at face value what was presented in the past by

school leaders. They recognise the need to question, challenge and push school leaders to secure improvements for all pupils. They are also determined to gain a better understanding of the way that pupils' progress is measured compared with national expectations.

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 works closely with the school and rates its improvement to be a high priority. The school has benefited from regular visits from the school improvement advisor who has worked closely with the headteacher on improving the way that the quality of teaching is monitored. The local authority has guided school leaders to a sharper and more efficient method of tracking pupils' progress regularly. The school is also supported by a National Leader of Education from a partner school.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector