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25 September 2013

Mr Simon Way
Headteacher
Victoria Road Primary School
Victoria Road
Ashford
TN23 7HQ

Dear Mr Way

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Victoria Road Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 and your staff 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 effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- increase the capacity of the governing body to challenge and support school leaders
- include more action points and measurable targets for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the school's development plan.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, three members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a group of pupils. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I looked at minutes of meetings of the governing body, information on pupils' progress and considered teachers' long-term planning.

Context

The school staff is back to full strength following a period when three teachers were away on maternity leave.

Main findings

Senior leaders have a clear vision for the school and are determined to build on recent improvements as quickly as possible. The headteacher has drawn up a well-focused action plan that addresses the areas for improvement in the inspection report. Although, there are clear measurable targets for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 in the plan, there are no targets for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and very few specific actions to improve outcomes for children in the Reception class.

Senior leaders have begun work to implement the action plan and have made some important changes. For example, the checks made on teaching have been strengthened so that there is a greater focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress in lessons and over time.

The governing body fulfils its statutory duties, but is below full strength and does not currently have the capacity to challenge and support school leaders effectively. The local authority has commissioned a review of the school's governance and this will help governors to review their systems and processes for keeping the school under review. School leaders have agreed to send HMI a copy of the report on the outcome of the review and any subsequent action plan.

External support

The local authority adviser has a good working relationship with the headteacher. She visits the school regularly and provides appropriate challenge and support to the senior leadership team. The progress of the school is reviewed formally every six weeks and success is measured against the short-term and long-term targets in the school development plan. This is helping school leaders to drive improvement quickly.

The governing body will need additional support and training from the Governor Services Team to improve its effectiveness.

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

Yours sincerely

Melanie Knowles

Her Majesty's Inspector