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27 September 2013

Elizabeth Caldwell
Headteacher
New Road Primary School
Bryant Street
Chatham
ME4 5QN

Dear Ms Caldwell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to New Road Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Friday 27 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 effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- strengthen the leadership and management section of the school improvement plan, by adding detail, as discussed during the visit
- as requested by the interim executive board, develop a series of '30 day plans' that will capture precisely what is to be achieved and how in each area for improvement including identifying responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions
- clarify the roles of senior and middle leaders to ensure that all staff understand exactly what they are accountable for
- develop a governing body action plan to ensure the new governing body possess a clear framework to support them through the impending handover and beyond
- decide upon the range of additional actions and interventions that can be taken to tackle the underachievement of individual pupils currently in Year 6.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and two representatives from the local authority. The school development plan and school self-evaluation documents were scrutinised as were minutes from the most recent meeting of the interim executive board. You took me on a tour of the school and we made brief visits to all classes. During the school tour, you highlighted recent changes and the impact these are having on pupils' achievement.

Main findings

The school has benefitted greatly from the expertise of the Interim executive board. Members bring highly relevant skills and have demonstrated to school leaders, and more recently to the shadow governing body exactly what constitutes best practice in governance. New governors are aware of their responsibilities and are undertaking training to ensure they are sufficiently prepared for their roles. We agreed that it would be beneficial to draw up a governing body action plan to ensure momentum is maintained through the changing governance arrangements.

Staff at all levels are deeply committed to ensuring the school continues to improve. Everyone is ambitious to raise pupils' achievements and there is an evident sense of purpose. Staff turnover during the last academic year has been addressed and the school is again fully staffed. A number of significant actions have been taken to accelerate the pace of improvement. Classes have been re-organised so that pupils of similar ability are grouped together and support can be targeted where it is most urgently needed. Monitoring is more frequent and rigorous and includes workbook scrutinies, as well as lesson observations and checks on pupils' progress data. Performance management targets and professional training opportunities are more closely linked to the monitoring process. Teaching assistants now have greater responsibility for the progress of pupils within their intervention groups and are being given appropriate professional support to enable them to meet these challenges. Mathematics resources have been purchased and training on how to use them undertaken. During our class drop-ins, we observed many pupils using practical resources to support their learning. Teachers report that pupils are demonstrating greater confidence with number. In addition a specialist mathematics teacher is ensuring most able pupils are making better progress. These actions are helping to address the weaker progress made by Key Stage 2 pupils in mathematics last year.

End of Key Stage One data for 2013, revealed a significant improvement in standards of reading and writing. However, standards are still not good enough. A breakfast reading club and after school writing and mathematics clubs, in addition to

other strategies to raise the overall quality of teaching, are helping to address this situation.

Plans are fit for purpose and respond to the findings of the previous inspection. However, the development of '30 day plans' as agreed during the visit will provide greater clarity regarding actions, responsibilities and timescales. This, in turn, will facilitate effective monitoring and evaluation by leaders and governors.

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 has a clear understanding of the challenges facing the school as well as its strengths. Regular meetings, now known as Focused Achievement Boards, provide an effective mechanism for monitoring progress and holding school leaders to account for improvements. A significant level of guidance and training has been readily provided by the local authority. This level of support is on-going. The local authority continues to rate this school as a 'school of concern'.

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

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector