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14 October 2013

Helen James
Headteacher
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Chisenhale Road
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E3 5QY

Dear Ms James

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chisenhale Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 October 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:

- ensure that the new minimum expectations, introduced to improve the quality of teaching across all classes, are used consistently by teachers so that pupil progress rates accelerate
- improve achievement within years 5 and 6, so that more pupils achieve in line with other pupils nationally
- support new leaders to raise pupil standards across different age phases and within literacy and numeracy.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, the Chair of Governors and five other members of the governing Body. I met with two representatives of the local authority and a representative from the teaching schools alliance to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school raising achievement plan was evaluated, along with other school documents. You also took me on a short tour of the school and I looked at some work in pupils' books.

Context

There have been some staffing changes since the inspection. Four teachers from the Early Years and Foundation Stage, including the phase leader, have left the school. One teacher from Key Stage 1 and one from Key Stage 2 also left. You have recruited replacements for these posts, including two newly qualified teachers, from September. The governing body has elected a new Chair of Governors. You have also reorganised your teaching groups, so that pupils are taught literacy and numeracy skills in smaller classes.

Main findings

The raising achievement plan links closely to the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. It is detailed and specific which has allowed you to regularly review the progress you are making. You have set clear targets and the actions you have taken are starting to raise standards across the school. The monitoring role of the governing body and the local authority is clear. Pupil achievement and rates of progress improved last year. The careful tracking of individuals and groups has allowed you to target where additional support is still needed. This information is shared with middle leaders and classroom teachers, who report on the amount of progress all pupils are making. You are aware that inconsistencies across year groups and subjects still remain. For example, you have identified that pupils in year 5 and 6 are still underachieving in some subjects. You are addressing this with further interventions, such as teaching mathematics to some girls in year 6 in a small group. You have also arranged for a writer in residence to work with older pupils to improve their writing skills. You are confident that both these initiatives are starting to close gaps in achievement so that more pupils will have made better progress by the end of this year.

Professional training opportunities are carefully planned to link to the needs of teachers and the achievement plan for the school. This includes agreeing a set of minimum expectations for every lesson so that more teaching is consistently good. As a result, teachers are planning more effectively and displays are used to extend learning. You are increasingly holding teachers to account for applying these expectations but are aware that this initiative needs to be more firmly embedded.

You are monitoring the rates of pupil progress more closely through meeting with teachers, talking to pupils about their learning, analysing assessment information and undertaking teaching observations. All staff, including support staff, have targets that link to pupil achievement. This allows a fairer distribution of responsibilities and ensures that everyone is working together to raise pupils' standards. Middle leaders, many of whom are new to their roles, are benefitting from the extra training provided by the teaching schools alliance you have joined. Some are about to start accredited training programmes that are provided through the National College of School Leaders (NCSL). You recognise that they will require support while they grow into their roles but you consider that they are already making a strong contribution to the leadership of the school.

Governors are better informed and providing improved levels of support and challenge to school leaders. A new Chair of Governors has been elected, members have undertaken a skills audit and further training has taken place since the last inspection. Governors are now using all available information, including achievement data, to ensure that every child is making improved rates of progress. They have aligned themselves to different age phases and visit the school on a regular basis. They have enlisted the support of parents and the local community to ensure that the school can improve quickly.

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

You consider that the local authority offers good support. This takes the form of weekly visits from a school improvement advisor who has provided training for staff and support for leaders. You have joined the Teach East Teaching School Alliance. This provides support from the Institute of Education and includes a number of outstanding schools in the area. Opportunities for staff to train with other teachers, watch lessons in other schools and compare assessment information, have allowed them to improve their teaching skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector