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Mrs H Bartlett
Queen's Dyke CP School
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Dear Mrs Bartlett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Queen's Dyke CP 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors, and a representative of the local authority. You showed me around the school and we visited every class to observe teaching and learning. I looked at a sample of pupils' work and teachers' planning. I analysed a range of documentation, including records of lesson observations and information about pupils' achievement.

Context

The new headteacher took up post on 1 September 2013.

Main findings

The school has not improved quickly enough since the last visit in May 2013. There is too little teaching that is good and most teaching still requires improvement. Some teaching is inadequate. Too often pupils are given work which is not hard enough. Teachers are still not consistently matching tasks in lessons to pupils' abilities and

needs. Consequently, the majority of pupils are not sufficiently stretched in lessons and their progress is too slow.

The new headteacher has wasted no time in accurately identifying key weaknesses in the school and has taken swift action. For example, she has made sure that teachers' marking has improved rapidly. She has revised the process for checking on teachers' performance so that it is more regular and rigorous, and she has quickly arranged effective support for those teachers whose teaching is most in need of improvement. All teachers are now held fully accountable for the progress of the pupils they teach. However, other leaders in the school have been ineffective in improving teaching and pupils' achievement since the last visit. They have not taken urgent and incisive action. As a result, the rate of improvement has not been rapid enough and the capacity for future improvement is limited.

Whilst there are some signs of improvement in pupils' achievement, these are not indicative of sustained progress in all year groups. The provisional 2013 results indicate that overall standards have risen at the end of Key Stage 2 compared with 2012. Pupils made better progress in reading and writing, but they did not make enough progress in mathematics. Pupils' achievement in phonics in Year 1 has improved. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, however, fell in 2013 to the lowest level for five years because pupils did not make enough progress. Pupils' achievement in other year groups varies far too much and overall it is not good enough. Gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils, particularly disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those pupils eligible for free school meals, are not closing.

Since the last visit, governors have not held all leaders robustly to account in order to make sure that the necessary improvements in teaching have been made so that pupils' achievement improves. The external review of governance is complete, resulting in clear and appropriate recommendations that the governors are now determined to act on. The review also identified the potential for governance to improve because governors are beginning to challenge school leaders more effectively. This level of challenge has yet to become embedded and lead to improvements in leadership, teaching and achievement.

The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure that all leaders take urgent and effective action to rapidly improve the quality of teaching by making sure that teachers set work for pupils that is precisely matched to their abilities
- accelerate pupils' progress in all year groups so that achievement improves
- close the gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils, especially disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those who are eligible for free school meals

- build on recent improvements in governance so that governors robustly hold all leaders to account for improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. Another monitoring visit is likely to take place during the Spring term 2014.

External support

The school has developed links with Wood Farm Primary School, a local good school. This partnership is currently focused on providing coaching, training and support for teachers in order to improve their teaching. The local authority has rightly increased the level of support it is providing because of the slow pace of improvement, and the headteacher is making good use of this. An advisor for the Early Years Foundation Stage visits fortnightly and as a result provision Reception is starting to improve. The new school intervention leader regularly provides valuable advice and effective challenge, although of this has not yet focused enough on improving the effectiveness of other leaders in the school. She is regularly monitoring the progress of the school. As well as the external review of governance, the local authority conducted a review of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This has resulted in precise recommendations that require urgent action. Support for the development of pupils' early reading has had a demonstrable impact.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes

Her Majesty's Inspector