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7 November 2013

Mrs Val Eggleton
Headteacher
Riverside Junior School
Holme Street
Hebden Bridge
West Yorkshire
HX7 8EE

Dear Mrs Eggleton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Riverside Junior School, Calderdale

Following my visit on 6 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 July 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:

- secure leaders and teachers understanding of the characteristics of highly effective learning and teaching and what this looks like in lessons and pupils' work.
- better align the appraisal and monitoring systems so that performance objectives for individual teachers are clearly linked to the progress of their classes and groups of pupils.
- sharpen the current improvement plan to provide clearer milestones and time frames for measuring the impact of actions so that planned improvements can be checked more effectively.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and the support partner working with the school, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. Visits to all classrooms in the school were also undertaken.

Context

Since July 2013 one teacher has left the school and a new teacher has started. The school has seen a fall in the numbers of pupils entering the school which has led to a reduction in the number of classes. Two new parent governors are now in place and receiving induction training. There are currently three vacancies on the governing body.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors have responded positively to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. The headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body have attended a 'getting to good' workshop and as a result the school action plan has been amended. The plan focuses on the areas for improvement from the recent inspection report, with a clear allocation of key staff and governors responsible for monitoring the progress being made by the school. This is a clear and ambitious plan in the short term. However, there is some lack of clarity about future time scales. Without these specific details, senior leaders and governors will find it harder to accurately assess each action in terms of the impact being made by the planned activities.

The school has carried out a number of planned improvements since the last inspection, including training for teachers focussed on demonstrating outstanding teaching and learning. The school agrees that this has yet to translate into a clearly articulated vision that informs practice. Links with good and outstanding schools are now in place with a series of planned visits for teachers to learn from best practice. The web site is being updated and includes effective and timely communication from governors to the wider school community.

The governing body have acted promptly since the previous inspection. They have held a meeting with parents to answer questions and explain how the school will move forward. The teaching and learning committee have reviewed the school action plan and a separate action plan relating specifically to governance is now in place. The Chair of the Governing Body recognises that further training and development is required for governors and audit of governance is planned.

The school has recently put in place a new appraisal process for staff. This is clearly focused on the school improvement priorities and includes challenging targets. The same objectives are shared by all teachers, but the way in which individual members of teaching staff contribute to these outcomes is not clear. The school has effective monitoring systems in place to track the quality of teaching and learning and the progress pupils are making. However, leaders have not yet taken the opportunity to bring all these processes together to enhance the performance management of teachers.

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

External support is provided by the local authority interim school effectiveness officer who visits the school regularly to review progress and provide guidance. The school also works closely with a headteacher of another local school.

The support from external partners, including the local authority and links with other schools, has been prompt and proportionate to the needs of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector