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7 November 2013

Ms Sue Balfour-Bellamy
Acting Headteacher
Leaside Community Primary School
Leeds Old Road
Heckmondwike
West Yorkshire
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Dear Ms Balfour-Bellamy

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Leaside Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

This visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher and two other senior leaders, three members of the governing body and three representatives of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

There have been a few changes to staffing since the Ofsted inspection report was published. These changes are due to maternity leave or retirement from teaching. At the time of the Ofsted inspection, the school was led by an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher, both of whom had several years of experience of the school. This leadership situation remains the same but with another member of the senior leadership team taking maternity leave. The roles of individual members of the senior leadership team have been changed to accommodate changes of staff.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The senior leaders have responded positively to the Ofsted inspection report. Through close collaboration with the local authority, they have planned coherently to address those areas for improvement identified in the report. There is, consequently, a close correlation between the school's action plan and the local authority's statement of action.

At an administrative level, the coherence of planning is seen in the use of the same numbering system for identifying improvement points in both the school's action plan and the local authority's statement of action. The shared priorities in planning are backed up by the steps taken by the local authority to support the school. The authority appointed a National Leader of Education in November 2012 to work with the school on improvement. This is intended to strengthen the capacity of the school's management to bring about rapid improvement. The local authority has also commissioned a local educational trust, of which the school is a partner, to provide exemplars of outstanding practice in the areas for improvement described in the statement of action. Senior leaders have already visited other schools and describe the positive learning experiences they have encountered.

The school has made a good start at developing teaching and learning and improving leadership and management, as required by the inspection report. The quality of teaching is being monitored more rigorously with 'drop-in' lesson observations and many more 'learning walks' to track particular issues being monitored. Senior leaders and the National Leader of Education have carried out formal lesson observations jointly. The outcome of this more rigorous evaluation has shown the proportion of lessons judged good or better to have risen to 82%. An insight into the quality of teaching has also been gained by scrutiny of pupils' work, the frequency and the rigour of which have been increased. There is a clear programme of training for staff to develop their skills of evaluation of standards. Although it was an optional event, all teachers attended the professional development session on the analysis and use of pupils' performance data. Frequent meetings to discuss pupils' progress are now being held. Teachers receive the documentation for the meeting two weeks beforehand to allow them time to look at the data, analyse, reflect and plan for improvements before meeting with senior staff to discuss progress.

Senior leaders have made changes to roles in the school to align staff skills to the needs of particular roles. There is a clear rationale for the changes made. The senior leaders now hold more frequent meetings, which are minuted and have improved communication between leaders and with school staff. There is a clear agenda for these meetings and leaders exhibit greater professionalism and accountability in the way the school is led and managed. They have begun the process of distributing leadership responsibilities more widely. Team leaders are now responsible for monitoring pupils' progress and the role of subject leaders has been clarified. Training for subject leaders is being provided by the local authority in spring 2014.

The governing body is now more challenging and governors' questioning of the senior leaders has become more rigorous. While this change had begun before the inspection, it is now more vigorous and increasingly systematic. Governors value the detailed and unambiguous reporting of the headteacher and the positive response given to their questions. Not all governors' roles are developed to provide a consistent challenge to different areas of the school's activity to which they are allocated.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Richardson
Additional Inspector