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8 November 2013

Mrs Karen Smith
Headteacher
Meadow View Primary School
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Dear Mrs Smith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Meadow View Primary School, Rotherham

Following my visit to your school on 7 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:

- improve the teaching and learning of letters and sounds by drawing on examples of successful practice from other schools.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's improvement action plans and evaluations of progress were scrutinised.

Main findings

The well-focused and detailed action plan addresses the key issues identified in the inspection report. The systematic approach to reviewing impact is well supported by ambitious targets, clear milestones and defined timescales.

Leaders' recent analysis of performance in 2013 acknowledges the lack of progress made by Year 6 at the end of Key Stage 2, the decline in reading and writing at Key Stage 1, and the low results in the Year 1 and 2 tests of letters and sounds. The analysis explains some of the reasons for these outcomes and clearly identifies actions to tackle them.

In order to provide teaching that better meets the range of needs of pupils at Key Stage 1, classes have been reorganised this term with additional staff and some shared provision with the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school had invested in new resources for teaching letters and sounds during the last school year and staff expected more Year 1 and Year 2 pupils to meet the required standard in the national screening test for letters and sounds. School analysis shows that pupils who started school late, and some who do not use English at home, did not succeed. In addition, leaders identified weaknesses in the learning of certain letters and sounds and have decided to teach these earlier in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In order to strengthen the teaching of letters and sounds, leaders plan to link with schools with good practice.

Leaders report that their assessment at Key Stage 1 has been rigorous in documenting evidence that pupils have thoroughly secured the skills at each level. Last summer term, the leader of Key Stage 1 worked as a moderator to check assessments in other local authority schools and believes that the school has relied too heavily on written evidence and not enough on teachers' professional judgement when assessing levels. Leaders have reflected that, across all year groups, too much time and effort has been devoted to consolidating each skill and not enough on moving on to the next level. A different approach has been adopted this term, by teaching to the next level. After the first half term, higher expectations are contributing to early signs of improved progress.

At Key Stage 2, leaders were disappointed with the test results which were lower than expected. Some pupils did not do as well as expected, including some who lacked confidence in the test situation. Leaders have teamed up with a similar school with a stronger record of success to learn about preparing Year 6 for tests. In addition, the school has introduced a programme to tackle weaknesses in pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds in Year 6. Leaders report that pupils have responded well so far.

Leaders have introduced a new approach to writing across the school. Initial evidence suggests that pupils are beginning to write at greater length, with more enthusiasm and with better presentation. The whole school approach is beginning to bring more consistency to the teaching of writing. In order to give pupils more tools for working independently, the displays have started to provide clearer and more consistent guidance for learning, including models of writing and key words.

A recent leadership audit of mathematics showed that teaching does not provide pupils, especially the more able, with enough open-ended tasks and this has been identified as an area for development.

A new procedure has been introduced to give pupils more time and a clearer focus to respond to teachers' marking. Leaders report that staff and pupils like the new approach and are beginning to use it productively and more consistently. Leaders plan to increase the use of self- and peer- assessment which is underdeveloped.

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 consultant works effectively with the school to signpost examples of good practice and broker links. Constructive links have been made with a number of local schools to develop the analysis of data, move pupils to higher skill levels, and improve the teaching of Year 6, and provision for English as an additional language. Links beyond the local authority have been formed to extend the use of project work in the wider curriculum. The school would benefit from an additional link to improve the teaching of letters and sounds.

Local authority staff have provided helpful training and support for teaching Year 6; spelling, grammar and punctuation; early years; and special educational needs. Good use has been made of a range of training providers to develop resources and expertise.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Strategic Director, Children & Young People's Services for Rotherham.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector