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19 November 2013

Mr Steve Fisher
Kingstone and Thruxton Primary School
Kingstone
HR2 9HJ

Dear Mr Fisher

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kingstone and Thruxton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 November 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 May 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 frequency and the quality of the reviews of learning that take place in lessons, including through the use of 'visualiser' technologies
- improve the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring the learning environment better reflects the chosen topics
- ensure middle leaders can confidently evaluate effectiveness using national comparative assessment information
- ensure the minutes of Governing Body's meetings capture the challenge the Governing Body is providing.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, members of the Governing Body, including the Chair, to discuss the action taken since the previous inspection. A meeting was also held with the headteacher of Wigmore Academy. The school improvement plan, the minutes of the Governing Body meeting, the records of the school's monitoring of teaching, including assessment information were evaluated. Eight short visits were made to lessons to evaluate teaching.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in July 2013, the executive headteacher and the head of teaching and learning have left the school. The school currently has an acting executive headteacher and an acting head of teaching and learning. These roles are being undertaken by members of the school's senior leadership team. The Chair of the Governing Body has resigned and is no longer a governor. A new Chair of the Governing Body and two new governors were elected at the start of term. Since the previous monitoring visit, a review of governance has been undertaken. A new committee has been established to focus on the monitoring of standards. The school has also commenced working in partnership with Wigmore Academy, an outstanding school in North Herefordshire.

Main findings

More ambitious targets are being set, particularly for pupils that have fallen behind in their learning. This is ensuring that those eligible for pupil premium are experiencing more interventions aimed at reducing the gaps in attainment that previously existed. The creation of a new committee that focuses on standards means the Governing Body is now able to review the progress the school is making in a much more timely fashion. The Governing Body is now giving more attention to the primary school because the new standards committee sub-divides to ensure the secondary and primary phases are properly considered. The Governing Body is asking more challenging questions and has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. However, this greater expertise is not yet apparent in the minutes of the governing body meetings.

Senior leaders have ensured improvements in how assessment information is used to evaluate school effectiveness; for instance, governors can more easily evaluate trends in improvement by comparing the progress being made this half term to the same time period last year. The school's improvement plans have been further modified to reflect the outcomes of the monitoring visit in July 2013. Middle leaders monitor well the progress of individual pupils and are increasingly involved in evaluating teaching. Since the previous visit, they have undertaken joint observations of lessons. They also have a reasonable awareness of the weaknesses across the school, largely because they analyse pupils' responses to assessments in

most year groups. However they do not have sufficient knowledge of how the school's performance compares to all school's nationally, including how well disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs perform in the letters and sounds (phonics) screening check.

In the lessons seen, teachers talked less and ensured pupils devoted more time to working independently, usually on work that was matched to their abilities. Marking, and especially classroom displays, are providing pupils with much clearer guidance on what they must do to achieve their targets. Opportunities were missed though to reinforce key learning through reviews of learning. The school currently lacks the technologies needed to ensure examples of pupils' work can be effectively shared to highlight key learning points. Children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is hindered by the lack of an outdoor covered area. Also the environment had not been adapted sufficiently to reflect the current theme 'let me entertain you'.

External support

Leaders at all levels spoke positively about the impact of external support since the previous monitoring visit. The partnership with Wigmore Academy is relatively recent but has provided the school with helpful critical feedback. It is providing greater access to very good and outstanding practice. A high quality review of governance has been undertaken and has provided the school with a clear agenda for the further improvement of governance.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector