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12 November 2013

Mr J Brookes
Executive Headteacher
Barlow CofE Primary School
Millcross Lane
Barlow
S18 7TA

Dear Mr Brookes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Barlow CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 February 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:

- challenge all pupils, particularly the most able, throughout the whole lesson and not just when they are expected to work on their own
- make sure that all teachers give good advice when they are marking to rectify misunderstanding and consolidate learning
- use assessment information to identify specifically the proportion of pupils that exceed the expected level of progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and teaching staff to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Assessment information, marking and work in books was

scrutinised. I visited all classes in the school to observe teaching and learning. I attended a recent governing body meeting on 17 October to judge the quality of governance.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in May 2013 the headteacher has retired and the governing body has appointed an executive headteacher on a temporary contract who has responsibility for leadership in this school and another local school. Currently, the governing body is recruiting a new headteacher who is expected to take up post in September 2014.

Main findings

The leadership of teaching and achievement has continued to improve and has led to a marked increase in the proportion of good teaching. Teachers have benefited from effective coaching and training to strengthen their practice. There still remains some teaching that requires improvement. Where this occurs, some pupils, particularly the most able, are not challenged sufficiently. For example, at the start of the lesson they have to listen to the teacher giving instructions even if they are not relevant to them.

All teachers comply with the marking policy and many pupils respond positively to the comments made. Some of the advice given is not helpful enough in addressing misconceptions or to check that pupils have understood the task.

The executive headteacher has made good use of assessment information so that governors and staff have a good understanding of the progress of individual pupils. They check carefully that all pupils are making the expected progress. A proportion of pupils exceed the expected progress, but the school is not able to demonstrate well enough whether this is favourable when compared to national expectations.

Governors are much more effective at supporting and challenging the executive headteacher to lead improvements. They have high expectations of the school and demonstrated at a recent governing body meeting that the determination to being judged a good school features very strongly in all discussions and decisions they make.

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 headteacher and governors have benefited from a good balance of training, support and challenge that is making a useful contribution to the strengthening of the overall effectiveness of the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire and the Director of Education for Derby Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector