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21 November 2013

Mrs J Wetherell
Headteacher
Newlands Primary Academy
Dumpton Lane
Ramsgate
CT11 7AJ

Dear Mrs Wetherell

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Newlands Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 21 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 which have been taken since the academy's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy 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 headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, acting Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, the academy's attendance officer and the education welfare officer. Meetings were also held with two representatives from the academy's sponsor, the Kemnal Academy Trust (TKAT). The academy's improvement plan and sponsor's action plan were evaluated. The academy's single central record, which contains checks on staff appointments, was reviewed. The inspector accompanied the headteacher on a tour of the academy.

Context

Since the inspection the senior and middle leadership team has been restructured. A new deputy headteacher joined the school and a new acting assistant headteacher is currently in post. Three middle leaders have been appointed as 'leaders of learning' to take responsibility for year groups and subjects. Six new teachers have been appointed, five of whom are newly qualified teachers. The roles and responsibilities of some of the teaching assistants have changed. An attendance officer has joined the academy. There is currently an acting Chair of the Governing Body. The Early Years Foundation Stage teaching area has been completely redesigned and alterations have been made to other classrooms.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

The headteacher agrees fully with the judgement that the academy has serious weaknesses and with the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. The academy had already identified some of these before the inspection and the new systems which were being developed at the time of the inspection have now been introduced. The headteacher has communicated her intention widely that the academy should completely refocus its energies on improving the learning of the pupils. Staff now share this vision.

The academy improvement plan, which the headteacher has drawn up, addresses the issues identified in the report and the actions which are proposed are appropriate. It requires a small amendment to ensure that there are regular dates stated when the actions taken will be evaluated and that the correct people are involved in this checking.

However, from the evidence seen on the monitoring visit the plans are being implemented fully and in some instances their impact is beginning to have a positive effect. For example, the middle leadership team has now been strengthened with the appointment of the three leaders of learning. Their responsibilities include scrutiny of the work in pupils' books, lesson observation and performance management of teaching assistants. This has increased the capacity of the whole leadership team and allowed senior leaders to focus more rigorously on monitoring the quality of teaching. It has also meant that the senior leadership team are a more visible presence around the academy.

The appointment of an attendance officer, who works closely with the education welfare officer, has had a positive impact upon the absence figures. Attendance is much higher when compared with the comparable period last year. The academy is also addressing lateness to school and the introduction of the 'walking bus' is ensuring more pupils arrive on time.

Currently, the governing body does not have concrete enough plans to monitor the academy's progress. Individual governors have been in to monitor actions such as attendance, but, as a whole, the governing body is not holding the academy to account tightly enough for the progress which is being made. Not enough members of the governing body visit the academy regularly. However, the new executive governing body for the TKAT academies in Thanet is holding the academy to account by regularly reviewing its progress.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose. It identifies clearly the extensive support which the sponsor is providing to the academy and the outcomes which are expected. As well as considerable training, two members of TKAT visit the academy every week to support the senior leadership team, to observe lessons, to show teachers how to improve their practice, to provide training for newly qualified teachers and also to hold the academy to account for the progress being made. They provide robust and constructive records of visits.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Acting Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kent and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marcia Headon
Additional Inspector