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29 November 2013

Mrs Julie Nicol
Headteacher
Benjamin Hargreaves CE Primary School
Barnfield Street
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 2AQ

Dear Mrs Nicol

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Benjamin Hargreaves CE Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 28 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 September. 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:

- monitor actions being taken across the school to ensure maximum impact on pupils' progress
- visit outstanding schools so the quality of teaching and learning improves at a faster pace.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, senior and subject leaders, pupils, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives from the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plans; the school's system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress; and the monitoring of progress made since the previous inspection. I met with six pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 to talk about recent changes in the school and look at examples of their work. You and I visited each classroom to meet pupils and staff and look at the improvements to teaching put in place since the last inspection.

Main findings

You, the governors and staff are determined to ensure the school is good. The action plan focuses clearly on the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection and you have evaluated the impact of the actions that have taken place so far. One of the areas requiring improvement was the school's website with a deadline of 31 October 2013. You have met that deadline and the website provides the required information and more for parents, governors and the general public. The half-termly class newsletters and the reading guidance page give parents good quality information to help them support their children's progress outside school. The 'Kids' Zone' is engaging and relevant to the learning needs of your pupils.

You have implemented a rigorous monitoring regime to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement more quickly, with measurable targets and precise timescales, and shared this with staff and governors so everyone shares responsibility for raising standards. Subject leaders are involved in checking and improving the quality of teaching. For example you have undertaken lesson observations with the lead teachers of literacy and mathematics and scrutinised pupils' books with your school advisor and the governing body and these have given you a realistic view of the quality of teaching and the areas for development. As a result you have included planning, modelling and responding to writing into your training programme. Teachers have received training on matching their delivery to the needs of the pupils and the impact of this is evidenced in planning, pupils' books, and lesson observations since the input. You are aware of the inconsistencies across the school and are beginning to address these through further training and support. Your monitoring programme and appraisal system enables you to hold subject leaders and teachers to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.

You aim to develop a love of reading in all pupils by ensuring that teachers read to them regularly; areas in the school and on the website are dedicated to reading; a reading club has been established and trained volunteers visit the school weekly to promote the skills for reading. Pupils' reading ages have been assessed so that appropriate reading materials can be recommended to engage pupils and encourage reluctant readers. Pupils say that their reading has improved and could talk about the recent changes and how they have had a positive effect on reading habits. A nominated governor is evaluating the success of these actions and the new reading partners' programme. Pupils have made, on average, 13 months improvement since starting on the programme. Some staff have improved their comments to help pupils take the next steps to improve their reading but pupils' reading records too often just have comments on the amount of reading completed.

The marking policy has been reviewed by staff to ensure practice is consistent. Time has been set aside at the beginning of each day to encourage pupils to correct and edit their work in response to teachers' comments. Pupils are clear about their targets and how to correct and improve their work but putting this into practice is not done consistently across the school.

A new tracking system is in place so evidence of the progress made by different groups of children, and all pupils in the school, is available to be used by teachers and governors to identify future priorities for the school. The governors' standards and effectiveness committee has analysed data and are aware that the new system allows teachers to set more challenging targets for the pupils. Pupils are tracked from entry and pupil progress meetings

encourage teachers to set high expectations for pupils and monitor their progress throughout the school. The new system has already encouraged subject leaders to ask more searching questions about the impact of interventions. Subject leaders have submitted their action plans and training needs, to their attached governor for evaluation this week. Governors have a high presence in the school and are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. The governing body continues to support and challenge the school well by being involved in development planning, monitoring the teaching and learning experiences for pupils and talking to pupils. The governing body believes the school has the capacity to develop as required.

Although your current coaching and staff development is focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning, you, and your senior leaders, are aware of the need to visit other schools to observe good and better practice so that the quality of teaching and learning improves at a faster pace.

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 has supported the school through the school service guarantee and has continued to support the school following the recent inspection through its monitoring and intervention team. The local authority representatives agree that the school is improving but there is a need to accelerate the rate of progress regarding teaching and learning and have offered you links with other schools. Support through joint lesson observations and a teaching and learning consultant has been utilised and you have taken up their offer of workshops to develop writing skills and to support teachers in providing the next steps needed to accelerate progress. The local authority says the senior leadership team is stronger and more focused on improving the standards in school. The representatives are confident that the children have the capacity to make good progress with consistent support from staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh

Her Majesty's Inspector