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29 Nov 2013

Mrs Marilyn Whiskerd
Headteacher
Towers Junior School
Windsor Road
Hornchurch
RM11 1PD

Dear Mrs Whiskerd

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Towers Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 29 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 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:

- closely track the achievement and progress of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium funding, to ensure they do as well as other pupils
- provide opportunities for teachers to moderate pupils' work with colleagues from other schools to ensure their assessments are accurate.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other leaders, a group of class teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body with two other governors and a

representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans and other documents were evaluated. I also joined you on a short tour of the school.

Context

There have been no staffing changes since the last inspection. You currently have one class that is taught using a temporary teacher. Governors are seeking to federate with the governing body of the local infant school.

Main finding

The school action plan shows a clear understanding of your priorities and accurately identifies what improvements need to be made. Shorter timescales and milestones, linked to specific outcomes, would help leaders and governors to judge if improvements are happening quickly enough. The action plan is shared with all staff so that everyone is aware of their own part in making the school good as soon as possible.

The new leadership team is working closely together to raise standards across the school. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and the team is benefiting from the skills and experience of new members. A programme of training for teachers has been aligned with individual needs and the school action plan. New teaching strategies, including how teaching assistants are used to support learning, have been introduced. Leaders are aware that they need to measure the impact of these strategies carefully so that further training and support can be provided as necessary.

You are aware that inconsistencies in achievement and rates of progress across classes and subjects still remain and are working to address this. Achievement and progress information is closely analysed to identify where standards need to be improved. Effective systems for analysing information are now shared across the school. Teachers use this information to plan lessons that take account of every pupil's needs. They report on the amount of progress their pupils are making on a termly basis. This has started to improve rates of progress and when progress is less than good, further teaching interventions are made. Closer monitoring of targeted interventions for more vulnerable pupils, such as those with a disability or special educational need and those supported by the pupil premium funding, will ensure that they make progress in line with other pupils.

Governors continue to provide support and challenge to you and other leaders. They are informed about how much progress all pupils should be making and check that improvements are having an impact. They are meeting at the end of this term to

make a final decision concerning the proposal to federate with the governing body of the infant school, which shares the same site.

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

You consider that the local authority has offered you strong support both prior to and since the last inspection. This has included half termly progress meetings with a senior inspector to discuss key areas of improvement. A meeting has been held with the Head of Learning and Achievement to ensure that the school is on track to make the necessary improvements. The local authority has also provided you with a link to work with a local leader of education and headteacher of an outstanding school. You are using this partnership to provide coaching support for developing teachers while your new leadership team becomes firmly established. Further support provided by local authority officers has included training for new leaders and working to improve literacy skills across the school. Training on higher level thinking and reading skills is planned to take place in January. You have also worked with the local infant school to help staff develop their skills in phonics teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox

Her Majesty's Inspector