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Mr Lee Garbutt
Headteacher
Acres Hill Community Primary School
Mather Road
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S9 4GQ

Dear Mr Garbutt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Acres Hill Community Primary School, Sheffield

Following my visit to your school on 11 December 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 October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- further develop the teaching and learning in writing with a whole school focus on effective writing
- develop the improving practice in marking and feedback by giving pupils time to respond to feedback
- clearly identify ways in which governors will monitor the impact of actions taken to address the areas for improvement by collecting first hand evidence and reviewing pupil progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan and other documents provided by the school were evaluated. The headteacher took HMI on a learning walk of the school.

Context

There is a new Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body. Two classes will have new teachers in January 2014.

A formal consultation about the temporary expansion of the school is underway.

Main findings

Since the inspection the headteacher, supported by the leadership team, has taken rapid action to address the areas for improvement. There is an excellent action plan with clear milestones linked to success criteria and sensible timescales. The actions to be taken are appropriate and the way in which these will be monitored and evaluated is well documented.

There has been a focus on linking assessment data to lesson planning. Senior leaders scrutinise teachers' planning every week. Assessment methods have been clarified and the new target setting system includes helpful booklets for pupils to record their progress and levelled checklists linked to learning outcomes. The early impact of this work can be seen in improved progress in nearly all classes compared to this time last year, particularly for high attainers.

Marking and feedback are improving. A new policy will be launched in January 2014. Regular marking and feedback was observed in all the pupils' books seen on the learning walk, but pupils are not yet responding to the feedback in a way which helps them to make better progress. A detailed work scrutiny highlighted strengths and areas for development for each teacher.

Some teachers have visited an outstanding primary school to look at inspirational writing and are trialling new ideas to enthuse pupils with their writing. Good practice will be shared with other teachers. Teaching assistants are being trained in guided writing. Better writing was seen in pupils' books but it is rarely seen displayed in classrooms. The school needs to continue the concerted focus on writing so attainment and progress improve across the school.

Monitoring and evaluation is now more rigorous and includes evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of progress. Those teachers whose practice is not yet good have excellent individualised programmes of mentoring and support including joint planning, team teaching, modelling of lessons, training and observations. These programmes are already having a positive impact and there is more good or better teaching and learning.

Early Years Foundation Stage leaders have observed outstanding practice in another school and have improved the activities children choose for themselves so they make better progress and so gaps in their skills and knowledge are being reduced more rapidly. Better planning and target setting means that children's learning is linked to their own starting points and there is a focus on stretching the most able. Targets are highly individual and

shared with parents. Assessment is improving as a result of work with other schools and the local authority.

Governance has been strengthened through the addition of experienced new governors as well as a new Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body. A review of governance is planned in the New Year and is likely to result in a restructure of the governing body committees. In the meantime the full governing body are meeting monthly. A committee will meet each half term to monitor the impact of actions to improve the school. Governors need to decide exactly what information they will gather and from whom, including a schedule for collecting first hand evidence.

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

Support from the local authority has increased. They are leading a full consultation about the temporary expansion of the school and helping the school to plan for potential new arrivals. The local authority has supported the improvements in governance and brokered the support of other schools. The headteacher has useful links for training and development through a local partnership of schools. These links are helping the school to improve work in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

Her Majesty's Inspector