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Mrs Alicia Todhunter
Headteacher
Dane Bank Primary School
Thornley Lane South
Reddish
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Cheshire
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Dear Mrs Todhunter

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dane Bank Primary School, Tameside

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 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:

- ensure that Year 6 receive the best possible teaching from January 2014
- ensure that all staff are challenging the most able pupils in order for them to make the best possible progress
- ensure that teachers' assessment of pupil progress is more robust and that this information is gathered every half-term.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and the deputy head, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils. I evaluated the school action plan and scrutinised other key documentation. I also had the opportunity to accompany you on a tour of the school.

Context

Since the last inspection the Year 5 teacher has left and the Year 6 teacher is leaving at the end of the autumn term. A newly qualified teacher has been appointed on a temporary basis to take Year 5.

Main findings

You acknowledge that the recent inspection judgement was an accurate reflection of your school and you have used it as a catalyst for a renewed focus on improvement. Your action plan focuses closely on the areas for improvement which were highlighted in the inspection report. It gives a detailed account of actions and intended impact, but it is not always clear who is responsible for leading, monitoring and evaluating these specific actions. You have shared the plan with all staff and it is clear they are all on board for this journey of improvement.

You took swift and incisive action to tackle the issue of the quality of teaching in Year 5 and 6, which was highlighted in the report as not consistently good. It is now vitally important that the pupils in Year 6 are given the best possible opportunity to move their learning on at a fast pace. You have an outstanding practitioner in school and we discussed the reasons why she should take on responsibility for this key group of pupils as soon as possible.

Although you track pupils' progress, this does not take place frequently enough for the information to be used effectively to identify which ones require extra help in order to make the best possible progress. You are also aware that there is still an issue with the quality of some teacher assessment which means the data are not always accurate. You have planned to give more time for moderation and give support to those teachers whose assessment is not yet sufficiently robust.

There is strong evidence that your review of the marking policy is making a difference, although you know there is still some variability in how staff are using it. However, the pupils I spoke to could all explain how 'fix-it time' was helping them to improve. As one pupil said, 'the teacher shows me what I'm getting wrong and then I change it.'

There is the same variability in how staff are challenging the most able pupils and you have identified this as an area for development for some teachers. It is encouraging that some pupils were able to give me specific examples of how their teacher had really helped them to move their learning forward, particularly in mathematics. The member of staff responsible for mathematics, supported by the Key Stage 1 leader, has taken some action to improve the quality of teaching in this subject across the school. During my visit, we discussed how more time could be created for this middle leader to have a greater impact in this area.

The leadership team at Dane Bank has real capacity to drive forward improvements in the school. The deputy head has already had impact in the way she is supporting and challenging individual teachers to improve their classroom practice. Pupil progress is now at the centre of all monitoring and you are now using a lesson observation form which has a much closer focus on learning.

You took swift action in response to the comments in the report about information and communication technology. On a practical level, there is now wireless connection across the school and a new server has been installed. Interactive whiteboard training is taking place for all staff in January. You have also brought in a consultant to advise you on how to make further sustained improvement in this area.

The governance of the school is a real strength. Governors work alongside leaders in an effective partnership. They know and understand the issues in the school and consequently are able to offer appropriate support and challenge.

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 relationship which the school has with the local authority is a further strength. The local authority officer linked to the school has a real understanding of its issues and you speak very highly of the support you have received from her. You said that she brings 'options and solutions', and I saw evidence of this in my discussion with her. You feel the local authority training has 'fired up the staff', and they are also benefiting from the relationship with another local school where there is outstanding leadership.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne

Her Majesty's Inspector