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18 December 2013

Mr Timothy Glendinning
Headteacher
Beaconside CofE Primary School
Hutton Hill
Penrith
Cumbria
CA11 8EN

Dear Mr Glendinning

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Beaconside CofE Primary School, Cumbria

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- increase the pace of improvement by better use of the action plan
- ensure actions taken have maximum benefit on pupils' progress
- ensure leadership responsibilities are delegated to have maximum effect
- make links with good and outstanding schools.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, the Chair and nine other members of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan 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 and the school environment put in place since the last inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection you have employed a temporary special educational needs co-ordinator for two terms to cover maternity leave.

Main findings

Although you, the governors and the staff are determined to make Beaconside a good school the action plan lacks a sense of urgency to improve the quality of teaching and leadership. The plan has no short-term targets to measure progress and the tasks identified are too vague. Leaders were given a very clear focus on where specific help is needed but have failed to translate this into an effective plan.

Although work has been done to improve the teaching of mathematics, the impact of this has not been assessed by leaders. All teachers have a mathematics target as part of their performance management process so that they are accountable for its development within their classes. A new programme for teaching mathematics is becoming more firmly embedded. Work has been done to ensure that levels of pupils' ability are secure and shared with staff so they can address any gaps in knowledge or skills. Key stage meetings are helping spread good practice and get greater continuity across each key stage. You have scrutinised the pupils' mathematics books and given feedback to teachers about what is working well and areas to develop so they can adapt teaching to meet the differing needs of the pupils. However, some more able pupils say that they sometimes have to wait for help in class which prevents them from making rapid progress or being challenged to achieve at a higher level. The level of support that pupils receive is inconsistent.

Vocabulary banks and class displays have been created to help pupils use a richer variety of language in their written work and teachers have continued to use a wide range of reading materials to develop pupils' vocabulary. Work has been done on developing literacy skills through topic work and some staff have been coached on guided reading and improving the assessment of reading. However, there is much more to be done on ensuring consistency in writing for purpose, style and neatness of handwriting. The marking system is weak and pupils are not given dedicated time to correct and improve their work independently. As a result they do not learn from their mistakes. Middle leaders should be used more effectively to monitor and develop their subjects across all the key stages.

The headteacher, deputy and governors need to accelerate improvement through celebrating the positive and giving better guidance on areas that still require improvement. The governing body is keen to move forward and increase its understanding of the school, but currently is over-reliant on the headteacher to inform their views and is not challenging enough.

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 knows the school well and is aware of the performance and the standards your pupils achieve but has been unable to provide sufficient support to move the school forward at the required pace. The local authority has tried to support your governors and offered links other schools to develop leadership and improve the quality of teaching. So far you have had too little contact with this link school.

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

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh

Her Majesty's Inspector