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18 December 2013

Mrs Emma Neal
Headteacher
Stanton Road Primary School
Stanton Road
Bebington
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Merseyside
CH63 3HW

Dear Mrs Neal

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stanton Road Primary School, Wirral

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

- conflate the post-Ofsted action plan with the school development plan to ensure actions and success criteria are complementary and reflect the current situation
- make clear in the action plan how the governing body will monitor and evaluate the school's progress in bringing about improvement
- take up the available support from the local authority to confirm the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings to discuss the action taken since the last inspection were held with you and the headteacher appointed recently to share the role with you, the Chair of the Governing Body and the school improvement associate, who represents the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection in October 2013, the acting headteacher has ended her secondment to the school. You have returned on a part-time basis and now share the headship. This arrangement is in its fourth week. A teacher left the school on the day of this visit and three others, including a newly qualified teacher, hold temporary positions.

Main findings

You, the acting headteacher and the governing body accepted the findings from the inspection in October 2013, particularly that inconsistencies in teaching and organisational arrangements were affecting pupils' progress. The school was quick to take action and to draw up an action plan which steered work in November. Your return to school was well managed giving you time to review planned action with the acting headteacher. You have also gone beyond the agreed part-time working pattern to ensure that you and your partner headteacher have established clarity of roles, responsibilities and expectations. You have worked together to evaluate the impact of action taken in November/early December and compiled a plan for the next half term. The action plan is thus a working document reflecting the points for improvement in the report from the inspection in October, as well as current findings from your monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress. Although the plan gives intended actions and success criteria, it is less clear who will monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan. There is no mention, for example, of the part to be played by the governing body and how evaluation times can link to meetings of committees. Similarly, there is scope to be even more challenging and specific in identifying targets, such as the expected proportions of outstanding teaching at key evaluation points.

You have gained an overview of the current quality of teaching in English and mathematics and identified where individual and whole-staff support is needed to raise the quality. Professional development sessions are agreed to review planning, marking and assessment and staff have already visited other schools to see effective practice. Teachers are aware of their accountability for pupils' progress; the move to half-termly meetings with teachers to review pupils' progress and targets is a good step forward. Given that a fair proportion of staff are temporary/new to the school, the offer of support from the local authority is timely to confirm the accuracy of teachers' judgements of levels of attainment and progress made.

Much has been done in response to the need to increase progress in English and mathematics. To counter some of the limitations found in the commercial reading and writing programme used, you have made changes to the timetable from the start of the spring term to give separate sessions in mathematics, literacy, guided reading and writing. You have also purchased additional reading books and re-organised setting arrangements to ensure stronger continuity of teaching. Pupils now have a 'find and fix' time at the start of

each session to respond to their teacher's marking. You have also introduced 'investigation Friday' to raise the profile of using and applying mathematics.

The governing body is working closely with you and your partner headteacher to ensure that appropriate action is taken and progress is tracked and evaluated critically. An additional meeting of the full governing body was held specifically to review the school development plan and the strategy group is taking prime responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the impact of action taken. The Chair is very well informed about the school's performance and where the issues lie. He and other governors have taken care to ensure that the changes in headship arrangements have been well thought out; for example, a shared afternoon ensures smooth transfer of leadership.

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 provided significant support. For example, it is funding the additional half day of one headteacher. The school improvement associate is visiting the school regularly and also brokering support from other schools. He has carried out joint observations of teaching to confirm headteachers' judgements and to give guidance as needed to both headteachers concerning steps to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Local authority staff, including Advanced Skills Teachers in literacy and numeracy are also working with subject leaders to develop their skills in driving improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen

Her Majesty's Inspector