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10 January 2014

Gilly Gordon
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gordon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chandlers Field Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 January 2014, 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 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:

- Address the speed and urgency with which pupils begin work in lessons and respond to tasks set by their teachers
- Ensure a more even and manageable spread of improvement actions in the school action plan by creating a timeline which shows when they will happen and how they will make a difference, so that their impact can be checked.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, two members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. We also carried out a 'learning walk' around the school to look at the way in which the school's actions to improve writing were taking effect. I looked at a selection of pupils' books from across all year groups.

Context

There have been no staffing changes since the last inspection.

Main findings

You and the relatively new senior team have responded to the last inspection with urgency and determination. Your own evaluation of what needed to improve in the school largely matched the inspection report; you had begun the autumn term with a new leadership team and a sensible plan for improvement. This plan has since been refined and developed with an intelligent mix of swift and practical actions alongside development and training which will ensure that improvements are long term and sustainable. The development plan covers many areas, and I agree with governors, who commented that they felt it could be further honed and tightened to make it easier to monitor and check. The creation of a simpler timeline of improvement actions would make it easier for all to understand.

You have acted promptly to address areas identified for improvement. For example, you arranged high quality training for teachers in December in how to support pupils linking letters and sounds (phonics). This work will now be embedded by further visits and a programme of lesson observations to check that it is making a difference to children's learning. In our learning walk we noted that a child in the reception class was actively using letter sounds to help her work out how to spell a word.

Governors observed in one December visit that teaching assistants were previously used to teach children how to link letters and sounds. You have now changed this: following the phonics training teachers now work with the whole class so that teaching assistants can concentrate on those children who need additional support. Your lesson observations show that this has ensured better learning for the pupils.

You have re-written the school policy on the teaching of letters and sounds and have re-stated your high expectations for teaching in the early years. This has improved the children's skills in this area. Your developments in the teaching of reading, such

as changing reading scheme, offer the potential to improve standards but are at an earlier stage.

You have rightly implemented a rigorous focus on the teaching of writing across the school and this is beginning to have a promising impact. Pupils are now surrounded by the written word in all classrooms and learning areas. A good range of writing opportunities are provided by teachers and undertaken with enthusiasm by pupils. It was particularly encouraging to see children in the nursery and reception classes being supported to write, and then choosing to continue with reading and writing opportunities on their own. Pupils were being challenged at different levels by some hard word problems in a mathematics lesson. In one Year 2 classroom, pupils were calm and focussed as they worked on an extended writing task which was well supported by the provision of interesting lists of words to use. In another class, pupils contributed enthusiastically to read out complex sentences that they had written.

Pupils' books showed clear progress in writing over the last few weeks. They were well-marked, with pupils given the opportunity to respond to teacher comments and to improve their work. This is a result of the relentless attention given to this aspect.

The way in which you check the quality of teaching has become much more acute and systematic. You now have a detailed and accurate overview of all teaching in the school. Short, sharp targets are set for all teachers every fortnight to ensure swift improvement. You are using a combination of mentoring, coaching and lesson observations to make sure that these targets are understood and met. Lesson observations since the last inspection show that 21% more lessons are now good, and 12% fewer lessons are inadequate. This is very positive progress.

In some lessons, pupils were less well focused on their work. This matches your observation that children now need to begin their work more quickly and with a greater sense of urgency.

An external review by the National Governors' Association has been arranged for next week. Currently not all governors share a clear understanding of the school's position and the tough actions that are required to become good or better. The local authority reflected, rightly, that this remains a barrier to the school becoming good. Some governors provide a high degree of challenge and support, and their visits to the school provide helpful evidence for you, for example when looking at pupils' attitudes to learning and how this had got better. They were aware of the increased opportunities for writing for pupils due to your work in this area. Governors are very supportive of your leadership but they need to challenge and monitor the progress the school is making towards being good through referring to a revised action plan which makes it easier for them to see what should be achieved and by when.

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 very well and, through the services of Babcock International is working effectively in collaboration with you to provide well focused and effective support. You have welcomed their brokering of partnerships with two other local schools and a Local Leader of Education and have been quick to organise visits for staff and meetings for yourself with external colleagues. This has been very useful in helping you improve the precision of your feedback to teachers and to develop better systems of tracking teaching standards in the school. The way you have begun to use the mentoring and coaching meetings with teachers is an example of this. Your Leadership Partner, also part of the local authority support, has provided valuable help with tailored professional development for staff and your fortnightly meetings with him provide valuable leadership development. Visits to two other partner schools have complemented the training provided for teachers.

The local authority provide robust monitoring through regular review and challenge meetings with you; they make sure that their support is having a positive impact by holding support partners to account tightly.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector