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Jonathan Gallimore
Headteacher
Hardwick Primary School
Dover Street
Derby
DE23 6QP

Dear Mr Gallimore

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hardwick Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2012. 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 in the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteachers, leaders responsible for subjects and for provision for pupils requiring additional support, a member of the Governing Body who is also a representative of the Local Authority and an educational psychologist who works in the school. The school improvement plan, self-evaluation reports and records relating to the achievement of pupils were evaluated. With you and the member of the Governing Body, I evaluated the report on the expenditure of the pupil premium, which is extra money provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed forces. I made short visits to classrooms and support rooms to evaluate teaching and learning, accompanied by you and members of your leadership teams.

Context

Prior to the section 5 inspection, while the school was in special measures, an Interim Executive Board was established to govern the school. This arrangement has now ended and the governance of the school has been returned to a Board of Governors.

Main findings

The achievement of all groups of pupils is improving rapidly. In the past year, the proportion of pupils making progress at an expected or better than expected rate has increased significantly therefore standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics have risen. There are particular strengths in the achievement of the large number of pupils in the following groups; those who are newly arrived in the country with little English language; those with significant social and emotional needs and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. This is largely because of the precision with which their needs are identified, enabling exactly the support they require to help them to accelerate their progress.

All pupils are working towards challenging targets. Any who fall behind in their reading and writing are given a carefully planned programme of support, which helps them to make up lost ground very quickly. Typically, they make two terms' worth of progress in less than one. An important reason for the success of this programme is that leaders have concentrated on one approach of proven effectiveness and, in partnership with the local educational psychology service, have helped staff to develop high levels of skill and confidence in using it and adapting it to individual needs.

Pupil premium funding is spent very effectively with the result that the pupils it supports are accelerating their progress at the same rapid rate as others in their own school and more rapidly than most pupils in all schools. They are therefore quickly closing the gap on the national standards expected for their age.

All pupils are accelerating their progress rapidly because the overall quality of teaching has improved significantly in the past year. There is now a high degree of consistency in good or better teaching in all classes. An important strength is the organisation of staffing and the planning of lessons to meet the needs of all groups of pupils in every lesson.

A key reason for the rapid rate of improvement in the last year is that you have established high morale in all staff and energised them around the common purpose of securing the best possible achievement for every pupil, regardless of their background or needs. You, your deputies and other senior leaders have ensured a clear direction and appropriate training for all staff as required. Your recently established team of leaders for subjects, year groups and additional pupil support

has become effective very quickly. They help you ensure that good practice is quickly embedded in every class.

A smooth transition of governance from the Interim Executive Board to the new Governing Body ensures continued strong support and challenge. For example, members help you to ensure that your assessments of the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is accurate by arranging for them to be compared with those of pupils with similar needs in other settings.

Ofsted will recommend that the next section 5 inspection is carried out in the Summer term 2014, which is earlier than scheduled, because its overall effectiveness is likely to be judged as at least good.

External support

The Local Authority has a detailed knowledge of the school's performance. Recognising the capacity of school leaders to raise pupils' achievement independently, they no longer provide a programme of essential support. Indeed, they commission the school to provide support to others that need to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector