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14 January 2014

Mr Michael Mander
Headteacher
Edge Hill Junior School
Sycamore Road
Stapenhill
DE15 9NX

Dear Mr Mander

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Edge Hill Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 November 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. The school should work with the local authority and the local leader in education and take immediate action to:

- make sure all teachers plan activities that better match the needs of pupils of different abilities, especially in mathematics
- help all senior leaders develop the skills required to check rigorously pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching
- make sure governors receive the information they need to be able to ask precise questions about pupils' achievement
- ensure the school improvement plan contains measurable success criteria, so that governors can more carefully check the impact of actions within the plan.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors to discuss

the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including feedback to teachers following reviews of pupils' work and lesson observations, and the latest information about pupils' achievement. During the visit, you joined me on brief visits to some classes to talk to pupils about their work. HMI also reviewed some pupils' mathematics, literacy and topic books with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and three governors.

Context

Prior to the recent inspection, the governing body appointed a teacher to lead on developments in English and to oversee the achievement of more-able pupils. This teacher started working at the school last week.

Main findings

You have started to work with the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher to check more regularly the progress of different groups of pupils. Your latest information shows that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals do not always make as much progress as other pupils in the schools. For example, last term, over half the pupils eligible for free schools meals in Year 6 did not make enough progress in mathematics. You, the deputy headteacher, and assistant headteacher are planning to meet with individual teachers to discuss the actions that will be taken to raise pupils' achievement. You are also planning to check more closely the progress made by more-able pupils and those who have special educational needs.

There are a number of reasons why pupils do not consistently make good progress. Teachers do not make sure that they plan activities that are well matched to the learning needs of pupils of different abilities often enough. This is particularly the case in mathematics. During our brief visits to lessons we observed some more-able pupils completing activities that were too easy. Sometimes, teachers had planned more challenging activities for this group of pupils but did not let them attempt these activities until they had completed the same work as everyone else. As seen in pupils' workbooks, teachers are not providing pupils with enough opportunities to use their knowledge of number to solve complex mathematical problems. This is preventing pupils from making rapid progress in this subject.

The quality of teaching is not improving quickly enough because your systems for checking teachers' work are weak. When observing teachers, you and other senior leaders do not focus enough on the difference teachers are making to pupils' learning. This is also the case when you check pupils' work. For instance, you and other senior leaders focus too much on whether or not pupils' work has been marked rather than the impact of marking on pupils' progress. As a consequence, feedback to teachers following lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work does

not always identify the precise actions that teachers need to take to help all pupils make faster progress. Teachers' expectations of the amount of work pupils should produce vary from lesson to lesson, with pupils in some lessons producing very little work. During our review of pupils' work books we found examples of poorly presented mathematics and writing work.

The members of the governing body continue to check the work of the school through their 'monitoring morning' visits. However during these visits and their regular meetings, governors do not check carefully enough if the actions you and other senior leaders are taking help all groups of pupils make better progress. In part, this is because the information they receive about pupils' achievement is not concisely presented.

The revised school improvement plan is appropriately focused on tackling the issues identified in the recent inspection. Nevertheless, the plan does not have enough measurable success criteria. This makes it difficult for governors to check the impact of the actions within the plan.

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 impact of the local authority has been limited. Since the recent inspection, the local authority and an external consultant have helped school leaders to produce the school improvement plan. The local authority has met once with school leaders and the Chair of the Governing body to check the impact of leaders' actions. Further reviews are planned. The local authority is also planning to arrange further training for staff. This will focus on reading, writing, mathematics, Early Years Foundation Stage and special educational needs. You have organised for an external consultant to help you and other senior leaders strengthen your systems for checking the work of teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector