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Chris Gaffiney
Redbrook Hayes Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Gaffiney

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Redbrook Hayes Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 on 12 and 13 November. 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.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and a number of teachers. I also met with representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the section 5 inspection. I evaluated your plans for improving the school. I also looked at your plans for checking the work of teachers as well as information about the progress made by pupils. I considered the report written following the external review of governance and looked at minutes of governors' meetings. In addition, I looked at examples of the recommendations and advice given to teachers following observations of their teaching.

Context

The school has had several changes in leadership over a relatively short period of time. At the time of the section 5 inspection an interim headteacher had been in post for two days. Since the inspection a new, permanent headteacher has joined the school and the deputy headteacher has returned following a period of absence. An interim Chair of the Governing Body has been elected and two new governors have been appointed. As a result of a budget deficit, leaders and governors are considering redundancies among classroom support staff.

Main findings

Although you have joined the school very recently, you have already had a positive impact. You have a sound understanding of the school's current strengths and weaknesses and you have worked speedily to respond to the areas for improvement identified in the inspection. The school has been through a period of considerable turbulence including several changes in leadership but it is clear that you, the staff and the governors are all now looking to the future. It is evident from my discussions that you are united in your determination to ensure that Redbrook Hayes rapidly becomes a good school.

Your plans for improvement are closely matched to the school's most significant needs including those identified in the inspection report. These plans are ambitious and reflect your shared desire to bring about improvement quickly. You have rightly concentrated on improving the quality of teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress. Checks on the work of teachers are now more rigorous and you have established a clear timetable for visiting lessons and looking at pupils' work to check that they are making good progress. You are meeting with every teacher, every half term to discuss the progress of each pupil in their class. This means that when pupils are not making enough progress, this is identified quickly and suitable support is put in place.

Procedures for the formal review of teachers' performance have improved. The targets that leaders set for teachers are now closely linked to the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. As a result, leaders are more able to hold teachers to account for their work. The improved procedures also mean that the work of effective teachers can be recognised and good practice shared.

Teachers are all participating in a ten-session training programme to update their English subject knowledge and develop their teaching skills. A similar programme is planned to improve teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics including a focus on problem solving.

You have a clear plan to restructure and extend the leadership team based upon the priorities for improving the school. In addition, you have begun to develop the skills

and confidence of subject leaders and are establishing clear responsibilities and accountabilities.

Regular assessment of pupils' progress is carried out in all classes and teachers have worked with each other and with colleagues from another school to check that their judgements are accurate and consistent. This assessment information is used to identify which pupils might benefit from additional support. However, teachers are not using this assessment information, or information from their marking of pupils' work, well enough to ensure that they set work at the right level of difficulty for all pupils.

Attendance for 2012/13 was very low. However, since September attendance has improved and is now closer to the national average, although still below. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased. You are rightly continuing to promote and recognise good attendance and follow up absences promptly.

The governing body understands that the school has to improve quickly. They share the determination of the headteacher to make the necessary improvements rapidly and are confident about the school's future. The external review of governance identified several areas of weakness which the governing body is now tackling. You have worked with the governing body to establish an agreed code of conduct that provides clarity about your different roles and responsibilities. Currently, the governing body does not know enough about the progress and attainment of different classes and groups of pupils. Governors do not have a clear picture of the existing strengths and weaknesses in teaching. However, together you have introduced new ways of working which ensure that meetings and visits to school are more focused on teaching and learning. Minutes from meetings of the governing body provide little evidence that governors provide rigorous challenge to school leaders. However, governors have promptly arranged training to help them become more effective in providing both challenge and support.

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 is providing appropriate support to help the school improve. The District Manager for Improvement (DMI) has arranged training for teachers in order to improve the teaching of English and mathematics. Support is also being provided for teachers working in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is too early to judge the impact of this training and support. The DMI has visited the school to meet with school leaders and governors, visit lessons, look at pupils' books and evaluate plans for improvement. Similar meetings will take place each half term. The local authority also arranged the external review of governance. The local authority is working with

the headteacher and governors to identify a headteacher from a high performing school who can provide on-going support and challenge to school leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel
Her Majesty's Inspector