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Pauline Robins
Great Wood Community Primary School
Vicarage Road
Upper Tean
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ST10 4LE

Dear Mrs Robins

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Great Wood Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 21 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 in November 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:

- further develop tracking procedures to show progress made by all pupils and ensure this is consistently used by all staff
- ensure monitoring focuses on the progress made by pupils
- develop a longer term strategic direction for the school.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the assistant headteacher, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated, a number of short visits were made to lessons and school documentation was examined.

Context

Since the last inspection, two governors have resigned. One mid-day assistant has been appointed to the school.

Main findings

Everyone involved with the school is focused on improving outcomes and there is a clear determination to improve the school and secure a good outcome at the next full inspection. Governors are particularly effective and are holding staff to account.

An action plan is in place which is focused on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders have clear procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its actions and show how the school is improving. Governors are involved in the monitoring of the plan and regular discussions ensure the school is on track to improve at a rapid pace. The plan includes a clear focus on improving teaching and learning and external support is used to provide training to help teachers improve. Although the plan shows how the school intends to get to good, a longer term vision for the school is not in place.

Pupils' progress and attainment is tracked and shows how well all pupils and groups are performing. Data show that last term all pupils made at least expected progress. Leaders acknowledge that tracking procedures require further refinement to show small steps of progress. Furthermore, different ways of recording attainment and progress are currently in place. This results in a lack of consistency in how assessments are made on pupils' achievements.

The headteacher and other leaders are more regularly monitoring the quality of teaching. Activities include, assessing the quality of teaching, looking at pupils' books and visiting lessons. Feedback is given to teachers on their strengths and areas to improve. While leaders are monitoring more often, there is insufficient detail on how much progress pupils make in lessons and the impact monitoring is having on improving outcomes. A range of partners monitor teaching, including local authority officers, consultants and the local leader of education. This ensures a consistency of judgements about the quality of teaching.

A programme of coaching is now in place to help improve teaching across the school. The assistant headteacher is supporting teachers through sharing ideas for lessons and then observing lessons taught.

Greater focus has been given to ensure the more able pupils achieve their potential. New focus groups have been introduced to ensure higher expectations for pupils who are capable of achieving high standards.

Greater priority is now given to appropriate challenge in lessons and to the pace of pupils' learning. The 'motto' of challenge, pace and fun, has been adopted to ensure pupils make good progress.

Governors have received training and are effective in providing appropriate support and challenge. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and regularly check on how well the school is performing. They have given a greater focus on the use of data and have a better understanding of how to use data when discussing school improvement with leaders in school. Governors have completed a skills audit and used the information well to support the school. For example, a governor who works as a science professor is helping to improve science across school, and a health and safety consultant takes responsibility for health and safety in school. Governors have observed learning in lessons and met with class teachers to monitor pupils' books.

Greater attention is now given to the standards achieved by pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant. This is additional funding provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after in public care. Support includes attendance at a lunch time club where there is a focus on improving English and mathematics skills. Additional teaching assistant time has been devoted to help these pupils catch up with their learning.

Effective links have been made with the cluster of schools locally. Joint staff meetings have been planned, including some that are focusing on the changes to the national curriculum.

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 facilitated links with local good schools. This is to provide support with teaching and learning and leadership and management. Local authority officers are monitoring the performance of the school. They have provided training for the governing body and commissioned training from literacy and numeracy consultants.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector