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Paul Sanderson
Ladygrove Primary School
Old Office Road
Dawley
Telford
TF4 2LF

Dear Mr Sanderson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ladygrove Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 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.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher and with members of the governing body. I also met with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the section 5 inspection. I evaluated school leaders' plans for improving the school and I reviewed the information you provided about pupils' progress. I also considered minutes from a local authority review meeting. In addition I looked at records of the checks that leaders have made on the quality of teachers' work.

Context

The headteacher is retiring at the end of the summer term 2014. The governing body is working, with the support of the local authority, to appoint his successor. A recent advertisement did not attract sufficient high quality candidates and so the decision was taken to re-advertise.

A teacher with responsibility for leading Key Stage 1 and English is currently on maternity leave. A successful teacher from another school has been seconded to cover this absence.

Main findings

You, the staff and the governors are united in your determination to ensure that Ladygrove becomes a good school. You and the deputy headteacher have a clear view of the improvements required for the school to be judged as good at the next inspection. Your 'raising attainment plan' is well matched to the school's most significant needs and clearly outlines the steps that you intend to take in order to make the necessary improvements. However, your plans do not always provide sufficient detail about how you will check that the actions you are taking are being successful.

You have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching in order to raise achievement. You have revised your systems for checking on teachers' work; as a consequence leaders are now visiting lessons more frequently, as well as checking more often the work in pupils' books. Your feedback to teachers is identifying precisely what they need to improve. Individual plans are in place for those teachers who need extra help to improve their teaching.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' levels of attainment are collected regularly. This information is being used well by school leaders to determine which pupils are 'on track' to reach or exceed national expectations. However, the value of this information is dependent on the accuracy of the assessment judgements made by individual teachers and in the past these judgements have not always been accurate. The deputy headteacher is now working with teachers in Key Stage 2 to ensure that their judgements about pupils' attainment levels are reliable. You have recognised the importance of this work for teachers all year groups. School leaders should now secure opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues beyond the school to confirm that their assessment judgements are accurate and consistent.

Your focus on teachers' marking is leading to improvements in the feedback that pupils receive. Teachers' comments are now helping pupils to understand what they need to do in order to improve their work. Your use of 'table mats,' that show the next steps in learning, is also helping pupils to judge how well they are doing and what they need to do next.

You have employed an additional teacher to provide targeted support for pupils who need additional help with their reading, writing and mathematics. However, the impact of this work on pupils' progress has not yet been evaluated by school leaders and governors.

The small proportion of pupils who are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium are generally making progress in line with their classmates. Some of these pupils receive support from the additional teacher or from teaching assistants. However, school leaders do not check that all eligible pupils are benefiting from the additional funding.

Teachers have received focused training in order to improve the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and increase the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. You have purchased new reading books which allow pupils to practise and apply their knowledge of phonics in their reading. You have also worked with parents so that they know how to help their children 'sound out' words when they are reading at home. Records from your regular visits to lessons indicate that the teaching of phonics is improving and that pupils are beginning to make better progress.

You have ensured that teachers in the Reception classes have had opportunities to visit other schools to learn from the good practice of others. Teachers are using these experiences to make improvements in the ways that they record and evaluate pupils' progress and plan next steps in their learning.

You have recognised that further work is required to ensure that all middle leaders are effective. You are currently working with some of these leaders to ensure that their own teaching is consistently good. You have set clear expectations that this must happen rapidly so that these leaders can challenge and support other members of staff with confidence and credibility.

The governing body shares the determination of the school staff to make the necessary improvements without delay. Governors now have a good overview of the school's strengths and areas for development but are not always able to provide evidence or examples to support their judgements. For example, governors believe that pupils eligible for additional support through the pupil premium are making good progress as a result of the intervention classes. However, they are not sure how many eligible pupils are benefitting from this support or how much progress has been made. Minutes from meetings of the governing body show that governors are increasingly asking challenging questions of leaders and are becoming more involved in checking information about pupils' progress. Governors are keen to improve their skills and readily engage in the training provided by the local authority.

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 an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and is providing good support to help the school move forward rapidly. A representative from the local authority has visited the school to meet with school leaders and governors, visit lessons, look at books and evaluate their plans for improvement. Similar meetings will take place each half term. Training and support have been provided to improve the teaching of phonics and to improve provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority has arranged for teachers to visit other local schools to learn from examples of good practice. Support is also being provided to develop the role and impact of middle leaders.

In addition, the local authority is providing good support for governors as they seek to appoint a new headteacher.

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

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel
Her Majesty's Inspector