

PROTECT-INSPECTION

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Mrs Beverley Dolman
Headteacher
Calveley Primary School
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Dear Mrs Dolman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Calveley Primary School, Cheshire East

Following my visit to your school on 16 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 second 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 at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- help the small number of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding to make swifter progress so the gaps between them and their peers close more quickly
- build on the promising start with subject leaders so they have a greater hand in driving improvement
- iron out any remaining inconsistencies in teaching so that everyone is living up to the Calveley way of working.

Evidence

During my visit, meetings were held with yourself and the deputy headteacher, seven members of the governing body and a local authority officer to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We visited each classroom to talk to pupils, observe them at work and to look at their books. We also watched four lessons led by four teachers. The school improvement plan was evaluated. School data,

including the unvalidated 2013 results, were scrutinised. Your checks on teaching were also considered.

Context

There have been considerable changes since the school was inspected in December 2012. Over half of the teaching staff have left and have been replaced by temporary teachers. Two of these teachers took up post at the start of the spring term. A close partnership with another local school has been established as a trial soft federation. A deputy headteacher, from another school in the local authority, has been working at the school for two days a week since September 2013.

Main findings

Despite significant staff turnover, you have held firm and delivered your planned actions because you are passionate about giving pupils the best possible chance to succeed. This has paid dividends. The 2013 unvalidated results are the best the school has achieved in recent years. All pupils reached the levels expected for their age by the end of Year 2. Year 6 pupils left the school over two terms ahead in their learning because more pupils made better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Your own data show that this positive picture is becoming the rule rather than the exception in most classes and for most groups of pupils. You are rightly pleased that everyone's hard work is making a difference to pupils' achievement. Nonetheless, you know there is still work to do to help pupils make stronger gains in writing and to continue narrowing the achievement gap between all pupils and those pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to find out about different writing styles. However, not all pupils have the chance to practise their writing skills by writing at length for sustained periods of time. In some classes, pupils still have gaps in their use of punctuation and handwriting skills.

Your actions to improve teaching are bringing about success, although staff changes have not made this an easy task. You are continually working with different teachers to bring them up to speed with the Calveley way of working. Nonetheless, you are not allowing the turnover in staff to be a hindrance; in fact, you are viewing the changes positively and recognising the potential benefits fresh ideas and different teaching techniques can bring to the school. Although the teaching we watched during my visit did not always live up to your high expectations, pupils' books and school data suggest teaching over time is much better than it has been in the past. Some teaching is particularly strong because pupils are really challenged to think hard and deepen their understanding. The quality of teaching wavers in some classes because teachers do not shape tasks well enough to help all pupils make quicker gains in their learning. Sometimes, teachers do not ask enough questions to check pupils understand new learning. The quality of marking is improving quickly. Pupils say teachers' comments really help them to improve. Pupils appreciate the extra challenges teachers' put in their books and they like the chance to re-do parts of their work to make it better.

You know what you need to do next to continue building on your success. You have identified the right priorities to move forward because your checks on teaching and pupils' achievement are frequent. You are no longer doing this alone; the deputy headteacher is making a positive contribution to your drive for improvement by sharing your workload and supporting teachers when you are not on site. Subject leaders are beginning to grow in their role. They have a better grasp of what needs to improve in their areas of responsibility and have planned actions to make the necessary changes. However, they are in the early stages of checking the impact of their work.

Pupils are glowing in their praise for the changes you have made. They are unanimous in their view that the school is much stronger than it was a year ago. They say learning is more fun because teachers plan exciting activities and use lots of resources, such as video clips, to help them extend their ideas. They enjoy the opportunity to talk with their partners about their ideas before putting pen to paper. Pupils value knowing their learning goals and being told how much progress they are making to reaching their targets.

The governing body have come on leaps and bounds since the previous inspection. Their dedication, commitment and sheer hard work means they have set up strong systems for checking the work of the school that will stand the test of time. They have reviewed their own effectiveness, planned for improvement and sought training to ensure all governors are up to speed with their roles and responsibilities. All take the role very seriously which means individual governors deliver on planned actions and are held accountable by their peers. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses which means they are confident and competent in challenging you about teaching and pupils' progress. Their watch word of 'how do we know?' mean they are making a real difference to improving the school.

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

You are using external advice and guidance effectively to support you in your journey to good. The local authority continues to keep a close eye on your progress through termly meetings. At the request of the governing body, the local authority commissioned a review of governance which has been very helpful in confirming governors are on the right track. The local authority have responded well to your requests, particularly in securing and funding a deputy headteacher from another school to work alongside you for part of each week. You are exploiting the opportunities available through the close partnership with another school to share good practice and help subject leaders develop their skills.

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

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Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector