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29 January 2014

Mrs Nicola Scully
Colebrook Junior School
Towcester Road
Swindon
SN3 4AS

Dear Mrs Scully

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Colebrook Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 29 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, governors and the local authority are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- work with the adjacent infant school to share good practice and ensure consistency of assessment in the primary phase.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. A telephone conversation was also held with the school achievement partner and a visit was made to all classrooms. The school improvement plan was evaluated and evidence presented to support the plan was also considered.

Context

An additional teacher has been employed on a part-time and temporary basis to support small group and one-to-one sessions with pupils. One teacher who had been on an extended period of sick leave has recently returned on a reduced timetable.

Main findings

Teachers have responded positively to the areas identified for improvement during the recent inspection. They are sharing key features of good teaching and learning during staff meetings. By gaining ideas from video clips demonstrating best practice and through the adoption of a set of principles, which all staff adhere to, there is a common understanding of what is expected of them. Senior leaders look at weekly lesson plans and match them to completed work in pupils' books. Regular visits or 'drop ins' to class lessons, often with a focus on the progress more able pupils are making, ensures that improvements in learning are moving at a fast pace. Teachers have met with senior leaders and, where required, support programmes have been put in place. Response to additional training has been welcomed by all staff. The role played by teaching assistants to support pupils' learning has been clarified. They now have a better understanding of what strategies they need to use to support individual pupils.

By introducing a mental mathematics session after lunch, staff report that greater time can now be devoted to teaching concepts and skills during mathematics lessons. Recent training has increased teachers' awareness of how to ask pupils questions that will challenge their thinking and deepen their knowledge. Reading sessions, which now take place earlier in the day have a renewed focus and are being taught with greater urgency. The development and implementation of a consistent marking policy is having a positive impact on the quality of feedback that pupils receive. By working together teachers check and moderate each other's comments to ensure that the pupils are given clear improvement steps to help them on their learning journey. Discussions with other local Key Stage 2 staff have helped teachers to feel more confident about the robustness of their judgements.

Senior leaders show an unrelenting and determined drive towards school improvement. They make best use of local expertise and share their improvement journey with other schools. An electronic system to track and check pupil progress has been purchased recently to enable all teaching staff to have a clearer picture of individual achievement. Governors have a clear understanding of the need to make sure that when they challenge the senior leaders, this is recorded and highlighted. They also understand the need to present the way that pupil premium money is spent in a format readily available for outside monitoring agencies to evaluate.

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 advisor has played an active role helping to draft the school action plan and has met with governors to explain the sequence of events which occur when a school is required to improve. The advisor joined the Chair of the Governing Body and the headteacher at an Ofsted seminar where they were able to discuss and reflect upon the action plan together. Senior leaders are benefiting from joining a group of other local schools who meet termly to share experiences while on their 'Journey to Outstanding'. The most recent meeting focused on improving mathematics and this was well received by the senior leaders. The school achievement partner provides challenge and external validation in parallel to the school action plan and the priorities.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Swindon local authority and as below.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector