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4 April 2014

Mrs Mary Hill
Headteacher
Marlpool Junior School
Claramount Road
Heanor
DE75 7HS

Dear Mrs Hill

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Marlpool Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 3 April 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 January 2014. 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, meetings were held with you, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Pupil progress information and the school's records of monitoring the quality of teaching were analysed. I made informal visits to each class and spoke to some pupils about their work.

Context

There have been no significant staffing changes since the previous inspection. The school is currently undergoing some building works to improve the entrance and reception area for parents.

Main findings

The headteacher remains committed to making the necessary changes to bring about swift improvement to outcomes for pupils. She has a precise knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this is underpinned by a rigorous and accurate pupil progress tracking system. The school improvement plan reflects these ambitions. Targets are challenging and in line with national expectations. Planned actions are appropriate, with those responsible for leading and monitoring the impact of these are clearly identified. The headteacher has used the information she has on current progress to set clear, quantifiable success criteria by which leaders at all levels can measure the progress the school is making.

Since the inspection, school leaders and teachers have worked quickly to ensure that the information they have on pupils' progress now includes an analysis of progress in reading, writing and mathematics for each class set against national expectations. Expectations for increasing the proportions of pupils making better than expected progress have also been raised. This has enabled teachers to identify additional pupils in need of some targeted support. Teaching assistants have been involved in this process. They have received direct training from an external consultant in improving their role in monitoring progress within lessons. Leaders have re-organised groups in Years 5 and 6 so that pupils are now taught in single-year groups for mathematics. There is some emerging evidence that this is starting to accelerate their progress in this area.

Subject leaders are increasingly involved in monitoring their own areas of responsibility. An analysis of guided reading activities and a literacy work scrutiny has been undertaken. Feedback from these activities to members of staff is detailed, with considerable attention being given to how they can support individual pupils to make more progress.

Governors continue to be a considerable strength of the school. They have a good understanding of the information they receive on pupils' achievement and have analysed this so they are clearly aware of where gaps need to close. They have a frank view of where the school is in its improvement journey and provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to school leaders and teaching staff. They have ensured that the school website now includes all the statutory information required for parents and have instigated a more frequent cycle for monitoring health and safety across the school site.

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 school has been identified as a 'priority' school by the local authority and benefits from the support of a school improvement adviser. The adviser knows the school well and recognises that there is strong capacity in the leadership of the school for self-improvement. Support from an experienced mathematics teacher has been brokered in to improve practice and to enable increased interventions in Year 6. The adviser has also provided some support to the governing body, particularly in supporting governors' understanding of how the school performs in comparison to the local and national picture.

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

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley
Her Majesty's Inspector