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Mrs Jane Loader
Headteacher
Rainbow Forge Primary School
Beighton Road
Hackenthorpe
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S12 4LQ

Dear Mrs Loader

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Rainbow Forge Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 29 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

A deputy headteacher has been appointed to take up post in September. He will replace the temporary deputy headteacher. In March 2014, the school joined Birley Learning Community Cooperative Trust, a trust formed by local schools.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and governors are taking effective action to bring about improvements. Despite initial disappointment with the inspection outcome they accepted the judgement and are determined to demonstrate improvement.

A new approach to handwriting has been established. Pupils win a licence to use a pen when they learn to join all letters and use capitals correctly. The headteacher plans to further strengthen the teaching of handwriting.

The impact of recent training to develop the use of questioning has been evaluated by headteachers from partner schools. They judged that questioning to develop pupils' thinking is more successfully established in Year 5 and 6 than in other years. The headteacher has decided to extend teachers' skills by focusing on deeper questioning in guided reading and the development of reading comprehension.

More parents are involved in breakfast and after-school clubs and these opportunities have been used to promote reading. Pupils have made more use of the recently-expanded range of books and computer-based reading programmes. The school plans to develop the library and make links with the public library nearby.

The headteacher has begun to improve spelling, grammar and punctuation by introducing a short daily spelling session, organised in ability groups across Key Stage 2. This has increased predicted attainment by Year 6 in 2014.

In order to strengthen pupils' use of grammar in writing, the headteacher has identified the need to teach pupils to speak more grammatically. An audit is planned to identify the actions to be taken.

In mathematics, the use of pre- and post- assessment tasks for pupils at different levels of ability has helped teachers to pinpoint gaps in learning more accurately. School data indicates that pupils have made at least the expected rates of progress in mathematics across the year groups.

The school's work to develop pupils' attitudes and skills for learning should soon become more tightly co-ordinated by introducing the same focus in all classes each week, supported by assemblies.

In order to improve the impact of marking, a specific time for pupils to respond to teachers' questions or directions has been introduced.

A multi-agency support team carried out an audit of attendance. This gave the school a clean bill of health and no recommendations were made. Currently, attendance is higher than in previous years and persistent absence has reduced.

The role of subject leaders is beginning to develop. Plans are in place to allocate more middle leadership roles and to extend leadership training.

Year 6 is on track for better progress and attainment than in 2013. Data show that pupils are making at least expected levels of progress in all year groups. By the end of Key Stage 1 more pupils than in 2013 are likely to attain the expected level, though fewer may reach the higher level. The proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in their understanding of letters and sounds is likely to be similar to last year, which was average. Data suggest that pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium are making similar progress to other pupils.

On joining the Birley Learning Community Cooperative Trust, a review of the structure of the governing body was conducted, and as a result, the number of governors has been reduced. Also of the governors are now classed as foundation governors. Governors expect the trust to provide opportunities to share expertise and reduce costs. The planned benefits for teaching and learning are less well defined, at this stage. This governance arrangement is at an early stage of development.

Governors have increased their understanding of teaching and learning through more formal school visits and discussion with subject and senior leaders. They have also increased their understanding of pupil progress data. They have a sharper focus on the impact of the school improvement plan. Governors have organised a meeting with a national leader of governance to discuss further development. They are considering actions that would enable more governors to ask sharper questions.

The local authority has checked the progress of the school appropriately. English and mathematics consultants, jointly funded by local schools, have made an effective contribution to the development of teaching. A small forum of headteachers from across the local authority has been useful for analysing pupil progress and exploring issues in teaching and learning.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Sheffield local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell

Her Majesty's Inspector