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Paul Husken
Headteacher
Holme Hall Primary School
Taddington Road
Chesterfield
S40 4RL

Dear Mr Husken

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holme Hall Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 February 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. The school should take further action to:

- implement a more consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics, and improve pupils' progress in this subject
- set more challenging work and targets for those pupils who would benefit from this
- amend the school action plan so that it clearly lists individuals responsible for monitoring and evaluating actions

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, two representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. You took me on a tour of the school and we visited every class.

Main findings

You expect your teachers to more regularly check the progress that pupils are making in lessons, and for those lessons to be consistently lively. Teachers understand that they will now be assessed on these aspects during any lesson observations conducted. Since your inspection, you have observed all but two of your teachers; checking progress regularly was evident in every lesson seen, and lessons were consistently engaging. Once your round of observations is complete, you will report to staff on the different methods seen and share best practice.

A system of 'peer-to-peer' support has been developed, pairing teachers across key stages. This allows the school's best practice to be more readily shared, with colleagues observing each other's lessons and then giving developmental feedback. Teaching assistants will also benefit from this approach. A local school is also starting this initiative and you will work with them to help ensure the system is being used well. Although this initiative is established, practice will not begin until summer term so no impact can be judged at present.

An external consultant is liaising with your mathematics subject leader; a change in the organisation of mathematics teaching is imminent. This is necessary as an inconsistent approach has not helped pupils make good progress in this subject. A teacher will receive training in May on effective mathematics teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In your preparations for teaching the new National Curriculum, you have directed teachers to include opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills across subjects. All teachers were instructed to raise the profile of mathematics through more prominent and useful classroom displays. This has now happened, though the displays need to be more interactive to be of most use. An initial review showed that your new calculation policy is being adhered to by staff; you will ensure that this is still the case through subsequent reviews.

To help develop your middle leaders, you conducted a learning walk with your Year 2 and your Year 3/4 teachers. You used this to establish what they should be looking for when undertaking this activity. One of your teachers will begin a senior leadership qualification in September.

Some pupils would benefit from more challenging work, and through being set higher targets. Teachers should set more difficult extension tasks in their marking when appropriate, particularly in mathematics.

The full governing body has met twice since your recent inspection. While being proud of the school and supportive of its teachers, they acknowledge that pupils need to make more progress. Governors have contributed to the development of the school's revised action plan and they are committed to monitoring aspects of it. Membership of governance committees has been reviewed to improve their efficiency and some governors have changed roles as a result. New performance targets for the headteacher have been set which relate directly to the aims of the action plan.

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 representative of the local authority knows the school well and is aware of what needs to be improved upon. He has visited the school twice since the inspection to discuss the findings with senior leaders and he has commented on the revised action plan. He has recruited a teaching and learning consultant who will work to help improve the effectiveness of middle leaders and also to help ensure that changes in the teaching of mathematics are handled well. The local authority representative will visit the school after Easter to train all the school's teachers and teaching assistants on giving colleagues effective feedback following lesson observations.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector