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4 April 2014

Ms Katpitia-Mistry
Headteacher
Wykeham Primary School
Rainsford Way
Hornchurch
RM12 4BP

Dear Ms Katpitia-Mistry

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wykeham Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 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 October 2013. 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, I held meetings with you, senior and middle leaders, teaching assistants, members of the governing body, and representatives from Parklands Infant School and the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan. You joined me on visits to lessons where we observed teaching and learning, scrutinised books, and had brief discussions with teachers and children. I considered documentary evidence including the findings of the external review of governance, minutes of governing body meetings, records of the monitoring of teaching and summaries of pupils' most recent attainment.

Context

Since the last inspection, three teachers have left the school. A new teacher has been appointed to Year 1 but you have not been able to recruit teachers for the Reception and Year 5 classes. Responsibility for the Reception class is currently held by the nursery nurse, with a supply teacher taking responsibility for the Year 5 class. You are currently working to rectify these with permanent appointments. You have reviewed leadership capacity and are now seeking to strengthen the senior leadership team. The local authority has been instrumental in setting up links with Parklands Infant School to develop work in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Year 1. The local authority is now seeking to set up a similar link with another school to support pupils' writing at Key Stage 2.

Main findings

You and the staff have responded positively in tackling the issues identified in the inspection report. Your expectations are clear and well-focused as a result of your action plan. The plan makes it very clear that everyone has a responsibility to improve their teaching.

Your links with Parklands Infant School are mostly focussed on the teaching in Year 1. Teachers' confidence and morale has increased as a result of joint lesson planning and coaching with Parklands. Teachers know they need to ensure that pupils have more time to work on their own. However, you recognise that at present, teaching sometimes limits these opportunities. Children in the EYFS are benefitting from a greater range of activities using inside and outside space. Teachers and other adults are starting to make better use of assessment to plan activities that are closer linked to children's needs. Adults in the EYFS have had fewer opportunities to work with the partner school. While this has not impeded their development, better use of these links is likely to accelerate their improvement.

You have worked with teachers across all year groups to develop their knowledge of what better teaching looks like. Teachers have recently adopted new approaches to lesson planning. Rightly, you are keen to ensure that teachers pay more attention to setting work that matches pupils' abilities. Teaching assistants' skills and confidence have been speedily developed. For example, you have ensured that teaching assistants in particular year groups have received training in grammar for writing and phonics. As a consequence, these teaching assistants say that they are more likely to take the initiative when supporting children in mathematics and literacy. However, during our visits to lessons, we saw that this practice is still developing.

While your focus on assessment has resulted in some examples of good quality marking, the feedback that pupils receive about their work remains too variable. In some instances, particularly where classes are taught by supply teachers, marking is still poor. Where pupils are routinely making improvements to their work, this is as a

result of high quality marking. Consequently, pupils make better progress. This approach is not typical. In English, for example, pupils' work is marked more frequently and to a higher level of detail than their mathematics.

Pupils' progress is now tracked more rigorously across all year groups. Leaders are now ensuring more frequent and robust capture of pupil assessment information. These practices have been strengthened by good use of moderation clusters across local schools. Consequently, standards of assessment are consistent. Leaders are now beginning to use these systems to intervene where pupils' progress causes concern. You have ensured that leaders have undertaken a thorough review of pupils' most recent attainment and, consequently, set them higher targets. This reflects your increased aspirations for the school. Teachers now need to make better and more frequent use of tracking information in their planning of lessons. This is essential if they are to have a more significant impact on the achievement of pupils with different abilities.

The external review of governance has taken place. Governors have acted swiftly to respond to the main findings, particularly in their understanding of achievement information. Consequently, governors now have a dedicated committee which focusses on achievement and has met twice since the last inspection. Governors are beginning to develop their understanding of pupils' progress data. As a result, they are speaking with more confidence about which groups of pupils are making better progress. Governors are increasingly eager to use their growing knowledge to challenge leaders more effectively. To do this more effectively they now need to have a greater understanding of how leaders monitor 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

Since the last inspection, the local authority has provided three days of challenge and support from the school improvement partner. The school has benefited from focussed discussion about progress towards improvement and timely identification of additional support. For example, the local authority has given specific support regarding the application of phonics and good practices in the EYFS.

The local authority has also brokered links with two local schools. Initial links with an infant school have begun to develop teachers planning and evaluation of lessons specifically at Key Stage 1 and in Reception. Further support from a second school has been identified as necessary to address improvements to pupils' writing and is due to commence in September 2014.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector