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Abigail Rourke
Kingsfield First School
Gunn Street
Biddulph
Stoke-on-Trent
ST8 6AY

Dear Mrs Rourke

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kingsfield First School

Following my visit to your school on 19 May 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 March 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 and the acting head teacher and with the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I met with subject leaders for English and Mathematics and talked with a class teacher. I also talked on the telephone with a representative of the local authority. The school action plans were evaluated and a range of documentation was considered. This included information about pupils' progress and the records made by school leaders when they monitor the work of teachers. I also visited classes and looked at pupils' writing books.

Context

You have been executive headteacher since October 2013. You and the acting headteacher share responsibility for leading the school. This temporary arrangement

has now been extended until March 2015. Since the last inspection, one teacher has resigned and a new teacher has been appointed.

Main findings

School leaders, staff and governors are united in their determination to ensure that Kingsfield First quickly becomes a good school. You and the acting headteacher have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's current position and of the improvements that need to be made. Your plans for improvement are detailed and thorough and cover all the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The arrangements for monitoring the progress of the plans and for evaluating their success are very clear. No time has been wasted and improvements are already evident.

The improvements in teaching, recognised at the last inspection, have continued. School records and reports from the local authority indicate that more teaching is now good, with some that is outstanding. Where teaching is not yet good, leaders give clear feedback and precise targets for improvement. Well planned training is helping teachers to improve their subject knowledge and skills. For example, training has been provided to ensure that teachers can make accurate and consistent judgements about the standard of pupils' work. This has enabled teachers to make sure that their teaching and the work set for pupils are pitched at the right level for pupils of different abilities, so that all pupils can make good progress. Teaching assistants now regularly attend staff meetings and have opportunities to work with staff from Knypersley First School. This means that they have also improved their subject knowledge and skills.

You and other senior leaders are holding teachers to account for pupils' progress. Every half term, leaders meet with each class teacher to discuss the progress of pupils in their class. This ensures that any underachievement is quickly spotted and suitable support and interventions are put in place. Very thorough records are kept of these meetings so that any concerns can be followed up. This strong focus on achievement is starting to have an impact and more pupils are now making the progress expected of them. Some pupils make progress that is better than this.

You and the acting headteacher have worked closely with the English and mathematics subject leaders, so that they are now more able to evaluate teachers' planning and marking and give precise and constructive feedback. You have ensured that these leaders have opportunities to work in partnership with experienced leaders from Knypersley First School and with advisors from the local authority. As a result, the English and mathematics subject leaders are growing in confidence and are beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching. They talk confidently and knowledgeably about pupils' progress and about their plans for further improvement.

You and the staff have reviewed the guidance for marking. This is beginning to lead to improvements and some marking is of a high standard. In the best examples,

teachers' written comments help pupils to understand how well they have done and what they need to do to improve even further. However, this is not yet consistent in all classes. In some books, teachers' comments are too negative and in others little guidance is given to help pupils improve their work. Leaders should continue to make regular checks on the quality of marking and provide teachers with examples of the most effective practice.

Governors are ambitious for the school's future and are determined to ensure that improvement is both rapid and sustained. In addition to their usual meetings, a core group of governors and senior leaders meet every two weeks to discuss and evaluate progress. Several governors have visited lessons and looked at the work in pupils' books. As a result, governors are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the work of the school. Minutes of meetings of the governing body provide good evidence that governors are asking challenging questions and holding school leaders to account. Governors know that the progress of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is similar to the progress of other pupils. However, they are not all clear about exactly how this funding is being used, or if all eligible pupils benefit from it.

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 is providing good challenge and support and this is helping the school to improve quickly. The school improvement adviser has a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Local authority representatives meet each half term with senior leaders and governors to check on the school's progress and plan for future support. Subject leaders have found the guidance and support of local authority English and mathematics advisers particularly valuable.

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

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel
Her Majesty's Inspector