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Miss Rachel Smart
Headteacher
Park Road Junior Infant and Nursery School
Park Road
Batley
West Yorkshire
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Dear Miss Smart

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Park Road Junior Infant and Nursery School, Kirklees

Following my visit to your school on 13 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- undertake an urgent review of governance
- review the current improvement plan to ensure that it contains clear challenging targets (milestones) against which success can be measured over time and that rigorous monitoring is used to support this process
- establish clear procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and ensure that feedback to teachers focuses robustly on the achievement of pupils and groups of pupils in lessons
- provide urgent and good quality training so that staff are aware of what constitutes effective practice in teaching and learning and have opportunities to observe outstanding practice.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, a group of pupils, the Chair of Governors, subject leaders and a representative of the local authority. The inspector evaluated a range of documentation including: the school improvement plan; the tracking of pupils' progress, monitoring reports and records of lesson observations. In addition senior leaders took HMI on a tour of the school to look briefly at teaching and learning and the changes made to provision since the inspection.

Context

Since the inspection in January a major restructuring of staffing, combined with changes to roles and responsibilities has taken place. Staff absences have continued which has resulted in some pupils working with temporary staff.

Main findings

Despite some initial disappointment, senior leaders and governors accept that the outcomes and priorities from the recent inspection are the right ones for the school. However as a group, they have not responded with suitable urgency to tackle the school's shortcomings. The pace of change has been too slow, valuable time has been lost and as a result the school is behind schedule. Nearly five months on from the inspection, actions to tackle the areas identified for improvement are either embryonic or have yet to be planned. For example, the recently revised improvement plan is just beginning to emerge. Consequently there is no shared vision amongst staff and governors of what needs to be done to bring about the necessary improvements. The plan lacks cohesion and many of the actions planned may be related but are peripheral to direct improvement in the classroom and are not rooted in rigorous monitoring by senior leaders. Some of the actions are imprecise and do not have clear measurable milestones against which the impact of actions can be systematically monitored and evaluated. This makes it extremely difficult for governors to pinpoint with accuracy how well the school is improving over-time.

The pace at which improvements to provision are to be brought in is too leisurely and drawn out. For example, improving the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better was a top priority for the school identified in the Ofsted report. However, teachers have yet to receive training on the key features of effective practice in teaching and learning, how their work in the classroom might be improved or what outstanding practice looks like. In addition, the school's procedures for rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are almost non-existent and have been limited to an audit of practice in mathematics and a general overview of provision with short ten minute visits to lessons.

In many ways, information gained from these activities has not told senior leaders anything more than the inspection team highlighted in the report. For example, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are still too low in some classes, there is still a lack of challenge in activities for the most able and some pupils are still wasting time writing out the learning objectives for the lesson.

Quite clearly senior leaders need to focus more on implementing robust actions and solutions to tackle these weaknesses rather than confirming what has already been stated and reported on. Overall, senior leaders do not have a clear picture of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress or how well pupils and groups of pupils are achieving in lessons.

Action to improve the effectiveness of leadership and management has also not been swift enough. For example, the Ofsted report charged the school with undertaking an external review of governance, to include an urgent review of the school's use of pupil premium funding and to assess how governance may be improved. Approximately one term on from the previous inspection the review has not even started which clearly is not good enough. Governors must do more to strengthen their impact.

In contrast, the schools actions to improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average have been effective. Attendance rates have significantly improved over-time, reflecting the school's strong impact in working with parents and families and encouraging pupils to attend school more regularly.

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

Support provided by the local authority before the inspection was frequent but has been ineffective in raising standards and in improving teaching and did not enable the school to become good. Since the inspection the local authority has intensified its support to the school, particularly in action to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics with the deployment of a specialist consultant to work alongside senior leaders. However, this support has not yet been translated into visible action which is shown to be making a demonstrable difference to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector