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Matt Whitely
Headteacher
Batchley First and Nursery School
Cherry Tree Walk
Redditch
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Dear Mr Whiteley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Batchley First and Nursery 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 of my visit. 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. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that tasks that are provided for pupils in lessons are challenging enough and do not require pupils to repeat work they have already completed
- ensure that the action plan states clearly who is responsible for each action
- ensure that checks on the quality of teaching focus sharply on how much progress pupils are making and that the feedback provided to teachers is detailed enough to enable them to improve their practice
- ensure that teachers' marking provides precise enough guidance to enable pupils to make improvements to their work

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, three 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 along with monitoring records and a summary of current achievement data. Short visits were made to some classrooms to talk to pupils and look at their work.

Context

Since the inspection in March one teacher has reduced her working hours to four days per week and additional non-teaching time has been provided for the special needs co-ordinator.

Main findings

The action plan focusses on the areas for improvement identified at the recent inspection. Actions are planned in a systematic way. The plan is updated and circulated on a regular basis and this is helping staff and governors to be well informed about the progress the school is making. The plan states when actions will be completed and how their success will be measured. However, some of the success criteria are not precise enough to enable governors to easily check if the actions have been successful in securing improvements. The plan does not specify clearly enough who is responsible for each action.

In order to improve the quality of teaching some teachers are receiving individual coaching. The impact of this work has not yet been fully evaluated. The checks that school leaders make on the quality of teaching are sufficiently frequent. However, these checks do not focus enough on the progress pupils make or whether each group of pupils is sufficiently challenged. The feedback provided to teachers is not detailed enough to enable them to improve their practice quickly.

The marking policy was reviewed in March. There is evidence in books that teachers have responded positively and are now providing pupils with some advice about how to improve their work. This is not yet consistent in all classrooms. Not all pupils fully understand this new policy and therefore its impact is limited. Additionally not all of the guidance provided by teachers is specific enough for pupils to make necessary improvements to their work.

The new system for presenting information about pupils' attainment and progress is providing school leaders with helpful information about how different groups of pupils are performing. Plans are in place to support governors to understand this new format to enable them to ask appropriate and challenging questions.

Teachers' planning now includes information about how different ability groups will be challenged within lessons. However, evidence from my visits to classrooms shows that the tasks provided for pupils in several classes are not yet challenging enough and expectations of what pupils can achieve are not sufficiently high. For example, in mathematics, pupils are not moved onto more difficult work quickly enough within

the lesson and spend time completing work that they can already do. This is preventing pupils from making the progress of which they are capable.

The school's monitoring records show that improvements have been made in the way teaching assistants are deployed within classrooms, however this is not yet consistent across the school.

The regular newsletters contain information about weekly attendance levels for each class and parents are contacted promptly if attendance levels give cause for concern. Although attendance remains slightly below the national average it has improved since the time of the inspection.

Governors have responded positively to the findings of the inspection and have a secure understanding of the key areas for improvement. They are beginning to undertake visits to the school that focus closely on the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. Governors acknowledge that they have a range of training requirements in order to enable them to challenge senior leaders more effectively. They have planned to organise training in response to the external review of governance, which is planned for next term.

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 a good level of support for this school. The advisor is visiting the school on a fortnightly basis. Additional advisors are supporting the school with improving the provision for more able pupils, the teaching of writing and on developing opportunities for pupils to practice their reading, writing and mathematics skills in a range of subjects. This support is just beginning therefore it is too soon to measure the impact.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie
Her Majesty's Inspector