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Maggie Stowe
Crestwood Park Primary School
Lapwood Avenue
Crestwood Park Estate
Kingswinford
DY6 8RP

Dear Mrs Stowe

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Crestwood Park Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 on 4 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:

- ensure all teachers, particularly those who are new to the school, are quickly able to adopt and implement the school's strategies for rapid improvement to pupils' progress and attainment and fully understand their accountability in achieving the school's targets
- include measurable and evaluative outcomes when reporting to governors about the actions taken to bring about improvements
- clarify roles of monitoring and evaluation so that groups are clear about their tasks and responsibilities.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Informal observations of lessons were undertaken as part of the tour of the school. Minutes from meetings with the school improvement committee, your reports to the governing body and evaluations from the school improvement partner were also taken into account.

Context

Since the inspection in February 2014 a full time teacher has returned from maternity leave.

Main findings

You have established an uncompromising focus on raising standards and communicated clear priorities and expectations. Training has been provided and more is planned. You have checked that teachers' assessments are accurate and independent professionals have moderated the findings. These assurances have enabled you to analyse the data and report to governors with confidence.

You were quick to communicate clear strategies to all staff to establish consistent approaches to teaching, assessing and improving pupils' skills in writing. You identified where developments were needed and challenged appropriately when individuals failed to improve. You introduced fortnightly checks to ensure teachers consistently implemented new strategies to required standards. These checks enabled you to intervene where necessary and closely monitor the impact of the new initiatives on pupils' learning. You were quick to recognise and amend inconsistencies in teachers' planning. However, staff turnover has caused some variation in rates of pupils' progress.

Teachers and teaching assistants now frequently assess pupils' achievement. As a consequence, they are more able to plan lessons which focus on what the pupils need to know and do next. Your data of pupils' progress indicate improved rates of progress in most classes. Pupils are aware of teachers' expectations of them because the criteria for their success in given tasks are shared and understood. Your checks of pupils' work have shown that they have applied different and appropriate writing styles to their work in lessons other than English. Teachers' marking demonstrates a better understanding for what the pupils need to do next to consolidate or extend their skills or understanding. Time is provided for pupils to practise skills and correct errors.

The deputy headteacher and literacy coordinator lost no time in compiling an action plan to address the areas for improvement identified for writing in the previous inspection. Priorities for improvement were deliberately clear and straight forward so that they could be implemented immediately. Simple checklists were issued to every member of staff to ensure everyone focused consistently on improving pupils' writing skills. The deputy headteacher's and coordinator's subject knowledge and expertise in writing skills are underpinned by a clear energy and passion for the subject.

Governors have received training in understanding their statutory duties, roles and responsibilities. Their training included the analysis of data recording pupils' attainment and progress. Governors set up a school improvement committee to track the school's progress in bringing about the necessary improvements. They created a policy for governor visits to the school so that they had shared and consistent expectations. Their evaluations from visits are recorded and shared with other governors. The governor representatives reported a growing confidence and enthusiasm within the governing body. They are increasingly eager to be part of the school's growth and success and have distributed responsibilities between governor members. Records of meetings provide clear evidence of governors' growing ability to ask how well actions have been implemented; seek evidence of pupils' rates of progress including that of different groups; and check that policies, for example, marking, are implemented consistently. Your reports to governors are closely related to the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. Actions are reported clearly but there are too few measurable outcomes to help the governors evaluate the school's success in bringing about the necessary improvements.

You quickly compiled a school improvement plan to address each of the areas for improvement. The actions are detailed and well considered. Those responsible for leading specific actions are identified and have suitable expertise to drive improvements forward. The plan includes clear, expected outcomes so that everyone knows what they are expected to achieve. Senior leaders and managers are involved in a suitable range of checks to ensure that judgements are based on secure evidence. However, the roles for monitoring and evaluating the school's progress are not clearly defined. Many of the actions are planned for the immediate future but the frequent checks conducted by you, the deputy headteacher and managers inform the next steps to be taken. This method is working well.

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 school continues to draw upon the expertise of an independent school improvement partner who has led training for governors and provided them with evaluative reports. You have made good use of expertise within a neighbouring cluster of schools. A formal local authority monitoring visit is planned within the following four weeks. The local authority representative reported absolute confidence in your ability to quickly secure the necessary improvements.

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

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway
Her Majesty's Inspector