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9 June 2014

Mrs Marie Curtis
Headteacher
Ash Grange Primary School
Ash Church Road
Aldershot
GU12 6LX

Dear Mrs Curtis

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ash Grange Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 June 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 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:

- consider strengths and weaknesses in teaching more carefully so that training can be more directly targeted at areas relevant for individual teachers

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders and with representatives of the Governing Body. I also met with representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. With you I visited all classrooms, and spoke briefly to pupils. I looked at a selection of pupils' books.

Context

Since the inspection, one member of staff has left the school and a long-term supply teacher is teaching Year 4.

Main findings

Since the inspection your determination and sense of purpose have increased the pace of improvement in the school. You and the senior team have introduced well-thought-out initiatives to improve standards of teaching. These have included a significant change to pupils' work books: pupils now complete all their work in one exercise book which makes it much easier to check and monitor their progress. It also helps teachers to plan and mark work more effectively, making sure that pupils apply new skills across all subject areas. Pupils are starting to enjoy lessons more as they are making links between their learning in different subjects. During our visits to classrooms we saw pupils behaving well and showing a good focus on their work. Exercise books reflected improving levels of progress, but this is still inconsistent, as is the standard of teaching

You have rightly focused on raising the quality of marking and feedback given by teachers. Training for teachers in this area is starting to take effect, but marking is not yet consistent across the school. Pupils are not yet all responding to advice given in their books, and need to be given the time and opportunity to do so by all teachers.

Your relentless focus on raising the level of challenge for pupils is starting to bear fruit. Sharply targeted support work, particularly in mathematics, means that pupils in Year 6 are on track to achieve much better standards than last year. Projections still fall short of national expectations by some way, but achievement is moving in the right direction. Greater impact of this work can be seen in Key Stage 1 where pupils' attainment is now on track to achieve much more than last year.

You have introduced a powerful new approach to teaching spelling across the school. An initial diagnosis of pupils' skills makes sure that teachers focus on exactly what they need to learn. Subsequent assessments show that standards in spelling are rising rapidly.

Following the inspection you brokered support from the local authority to develop the skills of subject leaders, and this has been supplemented by internal training from senior leaders. Subject leaders are gradually becoming more accountable for standards in their subjects. More training for newly appointed leaders with some additional coaching to build on this is sensibly planned for next term.

The external review of the governing body is not yet complete. They are part way through an evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses. The governing body is

now in the process of reconstituting and will be a smaller, more sharply focused group. Governors recognise that overall standards of teaching need to improve. Appropriate training for governors is planned for next term. Governors have a high degree of confidence in your leadership.

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

Largely due to a change in personnel, the support given by the local authority (LA) has not been effective since the inspection. Two interim support and challenge meetings between you, the LA and the Chair of Governors have taken place since February; minutes of these meetings do not demonstrate an astute enough assessment of the impact of any work undertaken. The LA's current knowledge of the school remains limited, despite previously high levels of involvement. Visits to the school have not taken place often enough, although more are scheduled. Training offered to teachers, whilst useful, is not followed through rigorously enough to ensure that it makes a significant difference to practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector