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Mrs Joy Thompson
Headteacher
Blackwell Community Primary and Nursery School
Primrose Hill
Blackwell
Alfreton
DE55 5JG

Dear Mrs Thompson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Blackwell Community Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 18 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 April 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, the assistant headteacher, subject leaders, three representatives of the governing body, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your plans for improvement. I considered documentation relating to the monitoring of teaching and reviewed your most recent data on pupils' progress and attainment. We conducted a tour of the school together and visited all classes to see pupils and staff at work.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the recent inspection.

Main findings

You have revised the school improvement plan and this is linked closely to the areas identified for improvement at the recent inspection. You, and other senior leaders, are checking on the quality of teaching more frequently. Lesson observations, checks on work in pupils' books and regular pupil progress review meetings, are helping to give leaders a more detailed and accurate understanding about the quality of teaching across the school.

You have begun to raise expectations of what pupils, especially the most able, can achieve. Teachers are using pupils' progress data, as well as their assessments of pupils' learning, to plan work that is better matched to the learning needs of pupils. They are checking more carefully on the progress of pupils during lessons and, where necessary, modifying the tasks or providing additional work. Training for teachers has helped them improve their questioning of pupils. Teaching assistants are more aware of what they need to do to support pupils effectively.

There are increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their understanding of mathematical concepts and this is helping them to gain confidence in solving problems. Pupils shared recent examples of how they had used their calculation skills to solve real-life problems.

The governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have a good range of experience and expertise but recognise the need to continually update their skills and knowledge.

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 timely support for the school. A number of local authority consultants are working effectively with teachers and support staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Appropriate training is planned for governors in the autumn term 2014.

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

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector