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Mrs Amanda Buckland-Garnett
Headteacher
Collingwood Primary School
Collingwood Road
South Woodham Ferrers
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Dear Mrs Buckland-Garnett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Collingwood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school development plan was evaluated. I also scrutinised information about pupils' achievement, reports to the governing body, external assessments of the school's performance and records of the school's observations of teaching. We jointly observed teaching more than once in all eight classes in addition to observations of reading and phonics teaching and other small group activities. Before the inspection I spoke to an external consultant who is supporting school improvement.

Context

Since the inspection four governors have resigned. Two have been replaced and the governing body currently has two vacancies.

Main findings

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governing body can already demonstrate impact on accelerating the school's journey towards becoming at least good. They have moved rapidly and decisively to improve the quality of teaching and to address the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. The school has produced a thorough and detailed improvement plan. This plan is appropriately focused on the areas for improvement identified in the most recent inspection report while retaining important priorities the school has identified for itself. The plan is very clear about who will do what and when, and is particularly strong in relation to targets for pupils' achievement. It is not sharp enough in setting success criteria for actions linked to some other areas such as improving leadership and management. The development plan outlines what has already been achieved very well. The school vision statement has been rewritten. It retains the focus on the school as a harmonious and welcoming place to learn but strengthens the focus on the progress of all pupils. Extra support is being provided to accelerate pupils' progress in Year 5. Targeted support is now in place for older pupils whose knowledge of letters and sounds is not as good as it should be and whose reading is suffering as a result. Before-school education clubs have been provided to boost the achievement of pupils. These are proving an effective strategy for improving pupils' basic skills. Activities are carefully chosen to match pupils' interests and needs, with hot and cold snacks and refreshments providing an additional incentive to attend.

Across the school, more teaching is now at least good. Every day now begins with a range of reading activities for all pupils. Reading areas known as 'book nooks' have been established in all classes and are proving successful in raising the profile of reading across the school. The book nooks host a range of reading-based activities for pupils to do, including research and book reviews. Every pupil keeps a reading journal to track their progress in reading during their time in the school. Their use has been improved since February so that the progress pupils make in reading is better recorded. Wall displays are increasingly well used to exemplify high expectations and celebrate good work. Pupils' writing is prominently displayed, as with the Year 6 work based on the diaries of Anne Frank and other work related to the Second World War. Displays also feature useful words, questions and ideas for pupils to make use of in their work. They encourage pupils to think about and articulate questions about their work. Expectations of what pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve are rising and teachers are setting work which more closely matches the learning needs of their classes. Pupils are enthusiastic and eager to learn and work together very well. Younger pupils are keen to talk to their partners, sometimes making a start even before they have been told what to talk about.

Because the quality of teaching is improving, pupils attainment is rising and their progress is beginning to accelerate. Year 6 pupils are forecast to achieve well, with some big gains on 2013. A number of pupils are expected to attain the higher Level 6 in reading and writing. This will be a first for the school. Year 1 pupils are expected to perform much better in the national phonics screening check. Attainment for Year 2 is set to be similar to last year but with a higher proportion reaching the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning were a strength at the time of the last inspection and this remains the case. Relationships are good, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and they have positive attitudes to learning. They are polite, welcoming, proud of their school and smartly dressed.

Senior and subject leaders now monitor the quality of teaching and learning, including teachers' planning, more frequently and effectively. Following advice from an external consultant, the school moved very quickly to improve the recording and reporting of its observations of teaching in order to enhance subject specific feedback and targets. There is good evidence of the impact of lesson observations on the quality of teaching. Areas for improvement from one observation are routinely checked on in subsequent observations. Subject leadership is now stronger. Subject leaders are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The school is well prepared for the introduction of the new National Curriculum in September.

The governing body is playing an important part in school improvement. Those governors spoken to were clear about what has improved and what still needs to be done. Members of the governing body have attended meetings with staff to plan and monitor the school development plan. They know how well pupils are doing and speak with confidence about the performance of particular groups of pupils. They are enthusiastic and very well placed to hold the school to account for pupils' achievement.

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 has made good use of external support and advice. The school has valued the challenge from its independent consultants and has acted quickly to act on their advice. The local authority linked advisor has provided regular and valued support in reviewing the quality of teaching, contributing to the process of improvement planning and working with the mathematics and English subject leaders to monitor pupils' achievement. She has also worked with the deputy headteacher to enhance leadership and management.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett

Her Majesty's Inspector