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Annette Burns
Headteacher
Amington Heath Primary School and Nursery
Quince
Amington
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Dear Mrs Burns

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Amington Heath Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 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 additional action to:

- improve further the teaching of phonics across the school
- improve further how information on pupils' attainment and progress is reported and compare the information gathered with how well pupils are doing in other schools nationally
- develop structured approaches to teaching syntax and grammar to every pupil appropriate to their age or stage of development
- make sure that improvement plans are sharply focused over a shorter timescale so that impact of actions taken can be measured quickly
- make sure pupils are completing the right work at the appropriate time and provide the correct amount of challenge.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, two governors and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including information about pupils' achievement, as well as a review pupils' work. Brief visits were made to classrooms.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the recent inspection, which judged the school to require improvement.

Main findings

Staff and governors are responding quickly to the section 5 inspection and they are able to show some early impact of some of the planned actions. For example, you have:

- increased your visits to classrooms to check on how well teachers are helping pupils to learn
- improved how teachers mark pupils' work
- begun to check the progress that different groups of pupils are making
- introduced a systematic approach to the teaching of early reading.

The improvement plan focuses on improving teaching and learning and appropriately includes consideration of staff training needs. Planned actions are the right ones to move the school to good. Even so, the intended actions cover too long a timescale and they are not always easily measured to check if the actions have been successful.

Actions to improve teaching are showing signs of success, with improved practice in some classes. However, results from visits to classrooms or checks on pupils' workbooks do not always contain precise detail on learning, progress and standards.

Teachers know that while improvements have been made in some areas, these improvements are not evident in every class, particularly in the teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) and in guiding pupils' wider reading. In order to improve pupils' knowledge of phonics, staff must ensure they check that the books pupils are reading at home include the sounds they are learning in the daily phonics lesson. At the moment phonics is taught in isolation. Teachers are missing the opportunity to improve pupils' skills further by not ensuring that pupils' use these skills to improve their writing. Too often pupils' misspelled words are not corrected.

Work in writing and mathematics books shows that in some classes, the work for pupils is not challenging enough. On occasions, teachers do not show pupils the best way of improving their writing quickly, particularly in improving pupils' knowledge of grammar and syntax. Work in mathematics books shows that some teachers do not help pupils deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts.

You provide governors with a range of information about pupils' progress. However, this does not always focus enough on the progress of different groups from their starting points. This makes it difficult for governors to check if different groups of pupils, such as those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or the more able, are making good progress.

Members of the governing body are keen to do all they can to help the school move quickly towards good. They meet regularly to discuss the progress of pupils and the actions that need to be taken. Governors are asking suitable questions about the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils.

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 has provided support for the school through Entrust and it holds a termly meeting to monitor the school's progress. However, the headteacher is relatively new to headship and would benefit from more frequent visits and from the support of a Local Leader in Education. Leaders would also benefit from making visits to other schools to observe good practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector