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17 June 2014

Mrs Evelyn Lister
Headteacher
Saviour CE Primary School
Eggington Street
Collyhurst
Manchester
M40 7RH

Dear Mrs Lister

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Saviour CE Primary School, Manchester

Following my visit to your school on 16 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. The school should take further action to:

- increase the frequency of assessment to once per half term so that teachers know if pupils are falling behind and can step in more quickly to help them get back on track
- hold teachers rigorously to account for the progress of pupils in their classes
- use performance management procedures more effectively and with greater urgency to tackle inadequate teaching and weak middle leadership
- refine the action plan so that success criteria relate more explicitly to pupils' progress
- improve the rigour of procedures to check on the quality of teaching, particularly marking, so that all teaching is as good as the best.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The action plan was evaluated. I also went on a tour of the school and visited all classrooms. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work and examined a range of documentation, including information on the progress of pupils currently on roll in the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new assistant headteacher who will take up the position in September 2014. The subject leader of literacy, who is also the Year 6 class teacher, is leaving the school at the end of this term to take up a post elsewhere.

Main findings

School leaders were under no illusions after last year's drop in standards that an inspection was likely to conclude that the school was no longer providing a good quality of education. The local authority has acted speedily and made it clear to the school that the decline was unacceptable. A substantial package of support has been put together which, in combination with support from other schools, has been effective in pushing forward school improvement.

The school's action plan is appropriately focused on the main priorities and is proving a useful guide to secure improvement; nevertheless it requires further refinement. The action plan has milestones and success criteria but these are insufficiently related to improvements in pupils' progress. Sometimes the aims expressed in the plan, although worthy, are too vague and difficult to measure. As a result, it is not always clear just what success would look like in terms of teaching and learning in the classroom, or in the quality of pupils' work.

The governing body has reacted positively to being asked by the school to play an greater part in leading the school. Governors have had training on managing the performance of staff and on provision for children with special educational needs. They come into school more frequently and have already set up a programme whereby they support pupils' literacy skills by listening to them reading. From September, governors will each 'adopt' a year group and they will be responsible for monitoring the progress of the pupils in their adopted year.

School leaders, including governors, have tolerated for too long in the past, inadequate teaching and leadership that have led to pupils' underachievement. School leaders are now much sharper and have started to challenge weaknesses in teaching; the revamped appraisal policy that school leaders and governors worked on together is a much better instrument by which staff can be held to account. In

addition, the local authority has been very helpful in providing expert advice on how to tackle personnel issues.

The leadership of literacy still trails behind that of mathematics. Initiatives to improve pupils' literacy skills are not followed up thoroughly enough to check that they are having an impact on raising standards.

The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has grown in confidence and this area of the school's work is going from strength to strength. The outdoor space is used highly effectively to encourage creative play that really helps children to learn. During my visit, I was invited by the children to book a flight at the 'Airport' and other children eagerly showed me the lists they had written to remind them what they needed to take on holiday. These children were obviously enjoying these activities that stimulated their imagination and enhanced their knowledge of the world. Another child excitedly showed me his drawing of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' on which he had made a very good attempt at writing key words in the story.

Considerable training has been provided to help teachers plan and deliver lessons that are better adapted to the needs and abilities of their pupils. This is starting to have an impact in the classroom. In response to the findings of the inspection team, teachers have improved the curriculum by introducing themes and topics designed to stimulate boys' interests. For example, during my visit pupils were enthusiastically researching aspects of the World Cup and they were clearly highly engaged in their learning. As a result of the above initiatives, according to the school's information there has been a marked improvement in pupils' progress on this time last year.

Marking however remains weak, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics. Mistakes that pupils make are frequently allowed to go unchecked leading to repeated errors. Sometimes teachers' corrections contain inaccuracies of grammar and punctuation and the way some teachers write can lead to confusion in pupils' minds as to how words are spelt. This does not provide a good model for pupils to imitate. Furthermore, this demonstrates that current procedures followed by school leaders to check on the quality of marking are ineffective.

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 acted well as a 'critical friend' and worked highly effectively with the school. The school has been challenged by the local authority to improve quickly. Productive partnerships have been established with other local good and outstanding schools. This has provided a stimulus to the school to consider new approaches to school improvement that are beginning to have an impact, particularly in improving the overall quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant
Her Majesty's Inspector