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19 June 2014

Kate Dadd Headteacher
Hempstead Infant School
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Dear Mrs Dadd

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hempstead Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 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 further action to:

- simplify and sharpen the school's improvement plan so that it shows clearly how and when the impact of actions will be measured, and who by
- ensure that governors are fully and regularly involved in the evaluation of the plan
- ensure that activities to check on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are regular and sharply focused on the areas identified for improvement in the March inspection report.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, a governor and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school development plan and examined records of pupils' achievement and checks on the quality of teaching. I also looked at records of governing body meetings, local authority meetings and notes of visits. I had a tour of the school accompanied by the year group leaders.

Main findings

You and your team are taking action which is improving the quality of teaching, learning and leadership. The information about attainment and progress of different groups is now a key part of discussions with teachers about the impact of their teaching. There is a stronger focus on learning and classroom displays and resources now reflect the learning that is taking place. The most recent checks on pupils' achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 show that their reading, writing and mathematics skills are improving. The teaching of early reading and phonics has also improved and there is a rise in the number of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonic screening test, although this is still below what might be expected given their starting points. Senior leaders have carried out some focused monitoring, for example, to check on the teaching of phonics. They have not however checked on all of the specific areas identified for improvement such as behaviour for learning, mathematics or whether the most able pupils are being sufficiently well challenged.

The school development plan covers the areas requiring improvement and many of the actions are appropriate. For example, there has been a range of training to support staff in making the necessary improvements. However, in parts of the plan, there is confusion between targets and actions and there is not a clear time frame to show when actions will happen. Nor is it clear how success will be measured and by whom. Governors are not currently included in the evaluation process.

Many of the governors are fairly recent appointments. A review has been carried out which identified actions which need to be taken to improve the effectiveness of their work. As a result, governors are beginning to organise themselves more efficiently, for example individual governors are now linked to specific subjects. Governors are beginning to ask more challenging and incisive questions. This is not yet sharply focused on the areas identified for improvement. The review into the use of additional government funding pupil premium was not carried out thoroughly.

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

A local authority advisor works closely with the school and provides staff training as well as leadership support and challenge. You and the school leaders seek out and act on the advice and support provided and this is having a positive impact, for example, in the better use of assessment information and in the improving use of classroom displays to support the pupils' learning. The school has requested local authority support to further improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Several teachers have visited other schools to observe good practice and a governor plans to observe a governing body meeting in an outstanding school.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector