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17 June 2014

Mr M Ingham
Barley Lane Primary School
Huxley Drive
Chadwell Heath
Romford
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RM6 4RJ

Dear Mr M Ingham

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Barley Lane 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 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. Plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- clarify how the actions and tasks within the school's post Ofsted action plan will impact successfully on raising outcomes for pupils
- make sure that planned actions to improve the school are monitored and evaluated for impact and that the outcomes are clearly communicated to governors
- complete both the review of governance and the review of pupil premium. Discuss future actions to be taken as a result of these reviews with the school's linked HMI.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your leadership team. Further meetings were held with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a group of middle leaders. A meeting was also held with a group of pupils representing Year 1 to Year 6. A telephone conversation took place with the local authority school improvement advisor. At these meetings we discussed the action taken since the last inspection.

I also undertook a tour of the school. This focused on marking and assessment. The school action plan was evaluated.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the context of the school since the last inspection.

Main findings

You have produced a detailed and extensive post-Ofsted action plan. However, many of the tasks are generic and non-measurable; the plan gives no clear indication of how the tasks will be monitored or their effectiveness evaluated. The local authority has recommended to you that clear steps for monitoring are added to the plan. This has not been done.

Deadlines are clearly marked against actions to be taken. However, these deadlines have been missed. The plan and actions have not been reviewed to take into account the impact that missing the deadlines will have on connected activities. New deadline dates have been added to the plan with no explanation as to the reason why deadlines have slipped.

You have reviewed the roles of the senior leadership team and have added additional capacity to middle leadership for the start of the next academic year. While there has been some immediate impact from the revision of senior leadership, this has been limited. These changes have not yet had a sufficient impact on outcomes for your pupils. The additional capacity required of middle leaders identified during the inspection in February 2014, will not begin to impact upon student outcomes until after September 2014.

You have reviewed the collection of student progress data and have reduced the frequency of its collection to allow for more purposeful use. To this end you have installed a new data management system. However, concerns about the validity of teachers' assessments have been raised by the local authority and the school. Senior leaders and governors are not able to demonstrate a solid understanding of pupil progress.

You believe that both the tracking of pupils' progress, and marking and assessment by teachers has been a major improvement since the inspection. During the inspection I observed an inconsistent approach to both the marking of pupils' work and the tracking of individual pupil progress. Marking is variable within and across year groups; there is little marking and assessment that supports pupil progress.

Pupils spoke about an improvement in behaviour since the inspection. However, it is clear that the use of inappropriate language, including racist and derogatory language continues outside of lessons. At times, pupils' behaviour slows the learning for others in lessons, and play can become too boisterous.

The school has commissioned a review of the use of the pupil premium. This has yet to be discussed and acted upon by governors. The current use of pupil premium funding is failing to impact sufficiently. A new plan for the use of the funding for the next academic year has been drawn up. As yet there is no measurable impact from these proposed changes.

A review of governance has been commissioned, but has not yet started. Governors do not possess sufficient information to support and hold senior leaders to account. Governors do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

The pace of improvement is not sufficient to ensure that all pupils will have access to good teaching and learning in the timescale you have planned for.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. It is likely that a second visit to the school will be arranged as soon as possible.

External support

Since inspection the Local Authority has increased its support and challenge to the school through the allocation of a no-cost Associate Adviser. Prior to this, although the school chose not to buy into the LA Advisory Services, the Local Authority carried out regular monitoring visits to challenge the leadership team on underperformance and support with school improvement planning.

The local authority has recognised that the pace of improvement is not sufficient. This has resulted in an increased level of support and challenge to your school.

In order to provide further support, the local authority has brokered a link to a local Primary School. The headteacher will support you and the senior leadership team one day a week from September 2014.

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

Yours sincerely

Kevin Flanagan
Her Majesty's Inspector