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Mr Iain Linsdell
Headteacher
Poplar Street Primary School
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Dear Mr Linsdell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Poplar Street Primary School, Tameside

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 on 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:

- build on the initiatives already in place to improve teaching and learning and to develop the role of middle leaders
- further improve planning, teaching and learning in mathematics across the curriculum
- develop a 'behaviour for learning' culture that celebrates pupils' achievements across the full range of learning activities
- include resource implications in the school improvement plan
- ensure that the school's behaviour policy is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 by making reference to all protected groups
- ensure that the school's child protection policy includes e-safety and safeguarding through the curriculum
- ensure the external review of governors takes place.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with yourself, other senior leaders, pupils, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and looked at school policies and recent attainment and progress data.

Context

Since the last inspection the school has appointed a new teacher for Years 3 and 4 who is also the new literacy coordinator; some changes have been made to the roles of the governors; and the school is preparing for expansion, which involves a considerable amount of disruption, planning, moving of classrooms and construction work.

Main findings

Staff, pupils, governors and the local authority officer are positive about the direction the school has taken in recent months. You and your senior team have put appropriate actions in place and evidence of positive impact can already be seen. Having said this, inconsistencies remain and you are aware that there is still much to be done to embed good practice across the school. Your data shows that reading has improved in Year 1 although writing remains a concern, particularly for boys; progress in Year 3 is good overall but, as in Year 1, boys' achievement is not as strong as it could be. However, Year 5 shows great promise with evidence of good progress for all in writing, reading and mathematics. In particular, the boys' writing project has made a positive impact in Year 5.

The post-inspection school improvement plan clearly addresses the areas for improvement from the last inspection, in particular the need to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by improving the way teaching and learning are monitored and supported. The plan includes key success criteria and realistic milestones but does not include detailed resource implications.

A targeted professional development programme is now in place which focuses, for the most part, on improving mathematics teaching, the quality of marking and feedback, and pupils' writing. Among other initiatives these issues are being addressed by: employing the expertise of a mathematics consultant to work with the mathematics coordinator; purchasing new, active classroom resources for mathematics; developing and implementing a new marking policy; and, focussing on the role of middle leaders in improving teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility. This is further supported by regular book scrutiny and by subject leaders' involvement in the improvement agenda through attendance at local subject network meetings and by helping to plan for the new thematic curriculum.

The pupils I spoke to all thought that their presentation skills and handwriting had improved since the inspection and that in Year 6 their work was more thoroughly marked. They are now more aware of the progress they are making. A Year 6 pupil commented that the teachers were now, 'more curious about us ... they watch over you to make sure your work is the best it can be.' Pupils told me that they enjoy school; that their teachers are fun and care for them but they were disappointed that the expansion plans have led to the loss of the library and the information and communications technology suite.

Leaders at all levels have a good understanding of what needs to be done to sustain improvements. Governors are committed and supportive. They have taken advantage of local authority governor training and are well placed to continue holding you and senior leaders to account.

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

You have sought external support from a range of sources including employing a mathematics consultant, linking with local schools to share good practice and developing a partnership with a local secondary school. The local authority school standards and performance officer has begun to support the school by offering bespoke leadership and development advice and the brokering of future links with good and outstanding schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector