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1 July 2014

Mr Ralf Muller
Acting Headteacher
Weston Coyney Junior School
Princess Drive
Weston Coyney
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST3 6NG

Dear Mr Muller

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Weston Coyney Junior School, Stoke-On-Trent

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 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:

- ensure that feedback to teachers, following the checks made on their work, includes clear guidance about what they must improve as well as information about how they will be supported to make the necessary improvements quickly
- ensure that the planned review of behaviour takes place as a matter of urgency and that the findings are used to make the necessary improvements to the way behaviour is managed, so that there is a reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour and in the number of fixed-term exclusions.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and with a consultant headteacher who is providing support to the school. I also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated. I also considered documents, including information about pupils' progress and the records kept following your monitoring of teaching and learning.

Context

The headteacher is currently absent due to ill health. You have been acting headteacher since early May.

Since the section 5 inspection in February, two teachers have left the school. An assistant headteacher and another teacher will leave the school at the end of the summer term. The officer manager has been absent due to ill health since February. The school has been successful in appointing two new teachers who will start in September.

Main findings

You have quickly established a positive partnership with the consultant headteacher, recruited by the local authority, who is providing support to help the school improve. You both have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and of the urgent need to make improvements in the quality of teaching so that all pupils make good progress.

Following several staff changes and in order to address a deficit budget, you have developed a new staffing structure for September. You have taken this opportunity to consider the needs of the school and establish a structure which better meets these needs. This has included a review of leadership roles and responsibilities, as well as a review of the way teaching assistants and other support staff are deployed.

You are making regular checks on the quality of teaching, by visiting lessons, looking at the work in pupils' books and by checking information about pupils' progress and attainment. You and a consultant recruited by the local authority are working with less experienced leaders to develop their skills in making checks on the work of teachers and on pupils' achievement. You are developing your systems for recording these checks and for feeding back to teachers. You have challenged underperformance and have made it clear that only good teaching is good enough. However, the areas for improvement shared with teachers sometimes lack clarity. They do not always set out clearly what teachers need to improve and how they will be supported to make these improvements quickly.

You have begun to improve the ways that you use information about pupils' achievement. For example, you have developed an action plan for each class which identifies any pupils who are underachieving, including those who should be aiming for the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2. The action plans clearly set out the support and intervention programmes that have been put in place to help these pupils make good progress. You are reviewing these plans each half term in order to check on progress and evaluate the impact of class teaching and of each intervention.

You have reviewed the way that pupil premium funding is spent and are making sure that it is used to provide support for eligible pupils (those known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed forces). You are now closely monitoring the progress of these pupils to check that the support provided is being successful.

In addition to arranging for support from a consultant headteacher, the local authority has also helped you to establish a partnership with Eaton Park Academy so that leaders and teachers have been able to learn from the good practice of colleagues in similar roles.

Teachers have received training to ensure that their assessments of pupils' attainment are accurate and consistent. They have worked together to check one another's judgements and have also worked with colleagues from other schools to ensure accuracy.

Teachers have also participated in training to improve their skills in teaching mental mathematics. The timetable has been adjusted to provide additional opportunities for the teaching of this important area of the curriculum. More frequent checks are being made on pupils' mental maths skills and these checks are being used to ensure that teaching addresses any weaknesses or misconceptions. You have also worked with a representative of the local authority to plan additional training to develop teachers' skills in teaching grammar, spelling and punctuation.

The information gathered from your checks on teaching and learning indicates that there has been some improvement in the quality of teaching. You recognise that teachers are keen to develop their skills and have responded well to the training and development opportunities provided.

You have raised expectations for how pupils should behave in school. You are working with all staff to ensure that behaviour is managed fairly and consistently. Your monitoring indicates that the great majority of pupils behave well in school and treat adults and each other with respect. However, the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils remains a concern. As a consequence of a less tolerant approach to poor behaviour, the number of fixed term exclusions has increased. Following any exclusion, you now hold formal meetings with excluded pupils and their parents, which clearly set out expectations and explain the support available to help pupils improve their behaviour.

The planned review of behaviour has not taken place and this should be completed as a matter of urgency. The review should consider the schools' systems for recording and following up incidents of poor behaviour and should evaluate the impact and success of the school's behaviour management policy. School leaders and governors recognise the importance of good behaviour for all pupils and have appointed a behaviour co-ordinator who will join the school in September and who will work with pupils who have difficulty managing their behaviour.

You have taken steps to improve the ways that the school communicates and consults with Parents. You have held a meeting to discuss the actions that the school is taking following the section 5 inspection. You have also consulted parents about reducing the length of lunchtime and about a new uniform. Many parents responded very positively and recognise the improvements being made.

The Chair of the Governing body shares your determination to see that Weston Coyney Juniors soon becomes a good school. Governors have worked hard to improve their skills and to develop a better understanding of their role and responsibilities. They meet regularly and ask challenging questions which hold school leaders to account for their work. They are pleased with the start that has been made but understand that there is considerable work still to be done to secure consistently good teaching and good outcomes for all 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 is providing effective support to school leaders and governors at Weston Coyney. The local authority knows the school well and has arranged for good support from a consultant headteacher, a local primary academy and other consultants and advisers. Regular reviews are used to measure the school's progress against the areas for improvement identified during the inspection. This good support and challenge has helped school leaders to raise their expectations for pupils' achievement and begin to tackle weaknesses in teaching and in the management of behaviour.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Stoke-On-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel

Her Majesty's Inspector