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4 July 2014

Mr S Atkinson and Ms M Phillipson
Headteachers
Dame Janet Primary Academy
Newington Road
Ramsgate
Kent
CT12 6QY

Dear Mr Atkinson and Ms Phillipson,

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dame Janet Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on Friday 4 July 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- improve the consistency of teaching and the achievement of pupils, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, by focusing its work more closely on staff who need more help to teach well
- build on the good work you and the staff are doing to develop the curriculum in year 3, particularly in writing, by applying what you are learning to other year groups.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, members of the local and regional governing body and a representative of the academy sponsor, The Kemnal Academies Trust, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan, your self-evaluation form and recent information about the achievement of pupils. We made short visits to classrooms together, during which we looked at pupils' work.

Context

Since the previous inspection the school has appointed a new deputy headteacher and a new assistant headteacher to the senior management team. The school has also appointed a new leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Main findings

You have both continued, through effective and robust leadership, to improve the school since the previous inspection. Nevertheless, you are under no illusion that there is much to do for the school to be judged good at the next inspection.

The achievement of pupils is beginning to improve. The attainment of pupils at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is increasing. Even so, it is still below the national average. More pupils reached the expected level in the year 1 phonics (the link between letters and their sounds) test than the previous year. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 is rising significantly and coming into line with national averages. Too few pupils, however, reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' writing is beginning to improve. This was evident in the work seen in books and on display around the school. It is good to see you are narrowing the gap between the attainment of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium grant and their peers. As we discussed, the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 is not increasing as quickly as in other areas and is still too low. You need to ensure that pupils achieve equally well in all key stages of the academy.

The improvements in pupils' achievement are due to your work to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers are beginning to make better use of questioning in lessons to deepen pupils' learning. On our short visits to classrooms, we also saw that teachers are beginning to think better about how to make learning more interesting. For example, a group of children we saw in a Reception class were trying to work out how to remove toy dinosaurs from within blocks of ice. Pupils, through the sensory experience of playing with the ice, were encouraged by the adult working with them to use ambitious and exciting vocabulary. The teaching of phonics is now more consistent and pupils are enjoying learning how to read more.

The useful training provided for staff has been led by different leaders within the school, as well as through collaborative work with other academies in the same trust. Despite this, as we agreed during our short visits to lessons, teaching still requires improvement overall. This is because some teachers are still doing too much of the thinking for the pupils. Other teachers' expectations were not high enough and so pupils lost interest in what they were learning. As we discussed, ensuring consistent improvements in teaching is key to the school getting to 'good'.

The leadership you and your senior management team provide for the school has strengthened. Despite being relatively new in post you are rapidly improving the areas recommended in the previous inspection report. You have provided much greater clarity for teachers so that they know what you expect in terms of their work. For example, pupils are beginning to make better use of teachers' marking of their work by reading and responding to it because they are now given time to do so by teachers. The sense of purpose and togetherness you have created amongst staff is helping the academy to move forwards at pace. The new appointments you have made are beginning to make a difference. Subject leaders are growing in effectiveness, particularly in English and mathematics. You have started to develop leaders in other areas of the curriculum. For example, the development of a leader for outdoor learning is having a positive impact on the curriculum you are offering. It is good to see that you now ensure teachers are increasingly clear about what they need to do to improve their teaching and that you are checking more carefully that they work on the required areas.

I was pleased to see the work you are doing to develop the curriculum, particularly in Year 3, to improve pupils' writing. I would urge you to consider applying this way of working, such as activities to engage pupils more fully in their writing, to other year groups.

The local governing body has improved. They are now doing more to monitor how your leadership is making an impact on the academy, particularly on pupils' achievement. They have a clear plan for how they intend to improve further. They are well guided by the work of the regional director of the Trust. Recent appointments to the local governing body means they are better equipped to provide the appropriate support in the future.

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 made good use of the support offered by the Trust. Through the regular guidance, support and challenge provided by the regional director, you successfully use opportunities for collaboration to work with other schools to improve teaching.

The Trust provides effective support and challenge at all levels and you are making good use of this to develop middle leaders, as well as your own leadership skills. I was pleased to hear about the regional director's plans for support in the future, which show how they intend to sustain progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kent and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes
Seconded Inspector