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4 July 2014

Mrs Marjorie Downey
Headteacher
Parkgate Primary School
Brooklands Road
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Neston
Cheshire
CH64 6SW

Dear Mrs Downey

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Parkgate Primary School, Cheshire West and Chester

Following my visit to your school on 4 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 April 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:

- extend the action plan so that it covers more than one year, includes precise targets and gives a clear indication of when, how and by whom progress towards those targets is to be measured.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, six members of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and a group of six pupils chosen at random from Year 6. As part of this meeting, I tested them

on their mental arithmetic skills. I also examined a selection of books from Key Stages 1 and 2 in order to assess the extent to which the new presentation policy is being reflected in pupils' work.

Context

The context of the school remains very similar to the time of the inspection. However, in September, four of the eight teaching staff will be new to the school or their particular roles in the school.

Main findings

Despite your disappointment, you, the staff and the governors accept that the school requires improvement and are working closely together to tackle the areas for development identified in the inspection report.

Since the inspection, you have drawn on the support of English and mathematics consultants to review current provision in those areas and to agree on actions for improvement. To date, the subject leaders for mathematics and English have visited schools recommend by the local authority where there is strong practice, for example in developing pupils' skills in mental arithmetic and extended writing. They have produced helpful reports on the factors contributing to success in those schools and identified key changes needed in Parkgate. These reports have been shared with colleagues and used to develop new policies on handwriting and presentation, as well as on the relevant aspects of English and mathematics. You have also conducted interviews with pupils to identify the factors which help or hinder them in producing more extended pieces of writing.

Together with the external consultants, you have visited classrooms to assess the quality of teaching and examined pupils' books to see what impact it is having on learning. You have provided feedback to individual teachers and to the staff as a whole on the strengths of what you have seen and where there is the greatest need for improvement.

The pupils to whom I spoke were very clear about the changes that have been made since the inspection. They said that they are now encouraged to write more and to make sure that their work is neatly presented. They welcomed the new 'presentation stickers'. If their work is not good enough, they have to repeat it, more than once if necessary. They now draw up plans before starting to write and they all agreed that the new 'proof reading code' is working well. They also make more systematic use of dictionaries, than in the past, to check on the meaning and spelling of words. They said they enjoyed the written challenges in mathematics and were very proud to sing the praises of the boy who could complete 144 questions in five minutes 'and get them all right'.

It is clear, therefore, that you and your staff have not wasted any time in starting to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the last report. You have produced a short term action plan and a log to monitor its implementation. Your action plan now needs to be extended so that it gives a very clear idea of where you intend the school to be at the end of two years. It needs to include clear attainment targets for the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 1, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Given that some of the year groups have underperformed in the past, there is a need to review the progress targets to reflect the fact that some pupils will need to make far more improvement than average if they are to achieve the standards expected for their age. The action plan would also benefit from having clear milestones so that, at regular intervals, you can assess how much progress has been made towards your stated goals and make the necessary adjustments in a timely way.

The members of the Governing Body have supported you in taking robust action to tackle underperformance. They are knowledgeable, committed and take an active part in monitoring developments and holding the school to account, particularly through the Teaching and Learning Committee.

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

Since the inspection, you have made good use of the support from local authority officers or the consultants on whose service they have drawn.

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

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh
Her Majesty's Inspector