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10 July 2014

Ms Anne Cooper
Headteacher
Bell Farm Primary School
Hersham Road
Hersham
KT12 5NB

Dear Ms Cooper

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Bell Farm Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in October 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weakness designation.

I recommend that the next inspection of the school is a full section 5 re-inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Surrey.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Moore
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better so as to raise attainment for all groups of pupils, by:
 - making sure teachers use information about pupils effectively so that all parts of the lesson, including the introduction, are precisely matched to the needs of all the pupils in the class
 - ensuring all teachers are flexible enough in their planning to adapt activities to meet learners' emerging needs within the lesson, so that all are constantly challenged and supported
 - ensuring teachers deploy teaching assistants well throughout all parts of the lesson
 - improving pupils' attitudes to learning and ensuring they tackle written work quickly
 - ensuring the new marking system is used consistently well to help pupils to improve, especially making sure pupils have opportunities to respond to the teacher's advice.

- Rapidly improve progress in mathematics for all pupils, especially those supported by pupil premium, by:
 - making sure the mathematics programmes of work are sufficiently challenging and cover all required areas
 - ensuring teachers' planning of mathematics lessons moves pupils more quickly beyond basic calculations
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their number skills in problem-solving activities and to work by themselves to find their own ways to solve problems
 - ensuring that pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding are given effective support to fill any gaps in their basic understanding and so rapidly catch up with their peers.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - checking the impact of new initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and increase the rates of pupils' progress to ensure they are effective
 - strengthening the way that all senior leaders, especially new middle leaders, work with staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning, lift pupils' progress and raise standards more quickly
 - ensuring governors hold the school fully to account for its performance.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 9 July 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. Twelve lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector talked to a group of pupils and looked at examples of pupils' writing and mathematics workbooks. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were out of school on a trip. The inspection was undertaken to consider the school's work to improve the three main areas identified at the time of the section 5 inspection.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, one teacher has gone on maternity leave and one teacher has left the school. Both posts have been filled by supply teachers this term. One of these vacancies has been filled by the appointment of a permanent teacher for September.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders are tackling school improvement with determination and commitment. Staff support the changes that have been made and there is a shared sense of ambition and higher expectation. The school's leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to make further improvements. Recent unvalidated Key Stage 2 results show pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals and others is closing, and in many year groups these pupils are doing better than their classmates.

Senior leaders have rightly made improving the quality of teaching a priority. There is now much teaching that is good and some that is outstanding. Teachers have benefited from a range of training and support, including collaborative work with local good and outstanding schools.

The previous inspection identified mathematics as a key area for improvement. Valuable training, the adoption of a consistent teaching approach across the school and effective leadership have resulted in significant improvements in the achievement of pupils in mathematics.

Senior leaders are establishing better communication with parents and carers, for example through subject-specific workshops for parents and carers and a weekly newsletter.

Governors have a good understanding of the information about the school, for example the levels of pupils' achievement, and are asking more challenging questions of senior leaders in order to hold them to account more effectively. Members of the governing body are linked to key areas of development and are making more frequent visits to the school. This is giving them a better understanding of the school's progress.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Senior leaders frequently carry out a range of checks on the impact of improvements on pupils' progress, for example, through classroom observations and looking at work in pupils' books. The results of this work are thoroughly checked and teachers are given useful feedback for improvement.
- Subject leaders are taking increasing responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching in their areas. Their skills have been developed through a range of effective training and support. These leaders have arranged useful links with other local schools and delivered in-school training to enable teachers to improve their practice.
- Marking and feedback given to pupils have improved. Work is generally marked frequently and clear guidance is given to pupils for their next steps in learning. Pupils generally respond well to these comments and make improvements in future pieces of work.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised. As a result, classroom activities present a greater level of challenge and pupils settle to written work quickly and purposefully.
- Teachers are becoming more confident in making accurate checks of pupils' understanding and then adapting their approach to meet pupils' needs. Teachers and teaching assistants frequently use effective questioning to explore pupils' thinking and address their misconceptions.
- Information about pupils' progress is collected each half term. Teachers are using this information effectively to plan activities that meet the needs of a range of pupils. In the mathematics lessons observed during this inspection, pupils were engaged in a variety of tasks pitched at a range of abilities.
- Pupils are developing a greater range of mathematical skills. Pupils are encouraged more often to solve problems and to explain their thinking. As a result, many pupils are able to think around more difficult and varied mathematical problems and apply their knowledge to find solutions.
- Teaching assistants have benefited from useful training and are taking an active role in all parts of lessons to challenge and support pupils. The school has taken part in a project with the Institute of Education to audit the use of teaching assistants across the school. As a result, the deployment of teaching assistants is more closely linked to their skills. From September teaching assistants will specialise in a particular subject for part of their timetable.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Some teachers do not move pupils on to more challenging work quickly enough when they have demonstrated that they have grasped a basic concept.
- Senior and middle leaders are currently driving improvement. Classroom teachers are not yet reflecting fully on their own practice to identify strengths and areas for development.

External support

The local authority adviser has an effective working relationship with the school's senior leaders and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Regular meetings between the school's leaders and the local authority's representatives are providing a suitable level of challenge and support. The local authority is providing a range of advice and guidance which is closely linked to the key areas for improvement. School leaders have benefited from carrying out joint lesson observations and other monitoring activities with the adviser which have verified their judgements about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Improvements in mathematics have been supported by a range of support and training from the subject adviser. The school has established helpful links with local good and outstanding schools. As a result, senior leaders have been able to consider ways of developing the role of teaching assistants, and classroom teachers have been able to observe teaching at these schools.