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Mr Patrick Foley
Headteacher
Southborough Primary School
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Dear Mr Foley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Southborough Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's action plan was evaluated. You joined me on some visits to lessons where we observed teaching and learning, and looked at pupils' work. We scrutinised some work from pupils in Year 4. I held discussions with five teachers and six pupils from Years 1-6. I met with three members of the governing body and held a discussion with the head of schools from the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection you have redefined some leadership roles to ensure balanced leadership of pupil progress across all phases. You have expanded the

middle leadership team, so that there is a leader for each of the foundation subjects. Two part-time teachers are due to leave the school in August. A full-time teacher of Year 6, a full-time phonics support teacher and a part-time teacher of computing have been appointed to take up roles in September.

Main findings

Leaders are making effective use of work scrutiny to review teaching so that they can provide bespoke challenge and support for teachers. Coaching provided by senior and middle leaders is contributing to improvements to teaching. We observed in our visits to lessons, and by looking at pupils' work, that teaching in some year groups is closely focused on pupils' different needs. You are clear that this is not consistent in all year groups.

The re-launch of the feedback policy has ensured that all teachers clearly understand your expectations with regard to marking. Our observations concurred with your monitoring that all teachers are regularly marking pupils' work. Teachers are providing helpful advice about how pupils should improve their work. However, we agreed that pupils are not making full use of teachers' feedback to improve their work. Pupils said that they would like more time in lessons to respond to teachers' marking.

Your determination to address the legacy of weak literacy over time is clear. Teachers have introduced 15 minutes of spelling, punctuation and grammar in to pupils' work every day. Leaders have also ensured that individual phonics support has been put in place for older pupils who need it. You are deservedly pleased with the impact these have had on recent phonics outcomes in Year 1 and English attainment in Year 6.

Leaders and teachers have redesigned the curriculum with the intention that literacy will be better integrated into other subjects from September. Topic planning has included themes which will be equally appealing to boys and girls. Teachers express satisfaction at the early success of some curriculum trials this term. However, you recognise it is too soon to evaluate the success of the new curriculum. Leaders are very clear about how they will evaluate the impact of curriculum changes from September.

Senior leaders are coaching existing and new middle leaders. Consequently, they are beginning to take on the leadership of their areas with more confidence. Middle leaders are now checking pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. In discussion, they indicated they feel better equipped to hold class teachers to account about the progress and achievement of pupils in half-termly meetings. Class teachers agreed that more frequent and rigorous review of pupil and teacher performance takes place.

Leaders have responded seriously to concerns about bullying. You have ensured that the views of pupils have been used to agree new strategies with staff for dealing with racist and homophobic bullying. Teachers clearly described the newly-agreed actions which are suitably swift and, as we discussed, proving effective. Pupils commented that they felt such behaviours were less common since the inspection. You acknowledge that there are still further opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to explore these issues in their lessons.

You have secured modest improvements to attendance in recent months, particularly in Key Stage 1. This is because you have put in place incentives for children to encourage them to attend well. Pupils are particularly excited about winning the key stage attendance cups. You have ensured the roles of the family worker and the educational welfare officer are more focussed. Consequently, they are beginning to challenge some long-standing persistent absence.

The school's action plan is supporting a well thought-out route for improvement. You have ensured that the planned actions are well matched to priorities. We discussed that most, but not all milestones make it clear how much improvement is expected. In some areas, you have already identified that the plan does not make teachers' and leaders' roles totally clear. You are currently strengthening the plan for 2014-15 following your recent evaluations.

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 a wide range of support to you, other leaders and teachers. A school improvement officer provides support and challenge for four days each half term. This is adding alternative perspectives to your planning and review of improvements. Leaders and teachers have been supported by consultants in English, mathematics and to a lesser extent in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, middle leaders are developing their confidence in using progress data, work scrutiny and lesson observations to evaluate learning.

You are in the early stages of formalising long term partnerships with two primary schools in Bromley. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these links because they are in their infancy.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector