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John Dodd
Manners Sutton Primary School
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Dear Mr Dodd

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Manners Sutton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2013. 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:

- monitor the quality of teaching more rigorously and support teachers in improving their practice
- ensure that the needs of individual pupils are better met, particularly through increasing the level of challenge given to pupils of all abilities
- ensure that pupils are given regular opportunities to respond to teachers' marking.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, a senior leader, two representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I scrutinised students' books from every year group.

Main findings

You, along with a senior leader from a partner school and a representative of the local authority, have scrutinised pupils' books on several occasions. You and your colleagues identified that the presentation of work needed to improve. As a result, you introduced a new, whole-school approach which teachers are consistently applying. This has resulted in clear improvements in this area, though the requirements are too demanding for the school's youngest children.

As your school is much smaller than average, each class contains a wider than normal age range. In this environment, it is vital that the individual needs of pupils are appreciated and well met, as there is often a significant difference between them. There is good practice in the school in this regard, for example in the recent grouping of pupils by ability for some subjects, but it is still an area which requires improvement.

Teachers' marking is good and sometimes excellent. Pupils are clearly told what they need to do to improve. However, this is not having enough impact on progress as teachers do not always direct pupils to respond to the feedback they are given, and therefore some of the excellent points made are lost.

Most pupils regularly and successfully complete the tasks they are given. The work pupils are set is often too easy and, therefore, there is potential to make more progress than that which is currently seen. This can, on occasion, negatively affect pupils' attitudes to learning. Many of the school's pupils would benefit from a greater challenge both through their lessons and through the feedback that teachers give them.

You reviewed teachers' planning and concluded that it was not always being made clear how pupils should best meet their learning objectives. As a result, 'success criteria' have been introduced to lessons and pupils better understand the learning that is taking place.

Teachers are beginning to develop pupils' thinking skills. Pupils are directed to consider thought-provoking questions or puzzles during morning registration time, and then explain their answers. Teachers are also beginning to encourage pupils to work independently. For example, in Key Stage 2 mathematics, pupils are beginning to be given tasks which they then must consider at length without regular teacher support.

Teachers are providing pupils with more opportunities to learn mathematics through practical skills and real-life scenarios. A 'Maths Trail' has been used to encourage pupils to use number in and around the school building. Also, linking with the school's theme of 'Around the World', pupils were given a budget to buy a French breakfast for 50 people. Pupils had to work in groups to calculate what they could

buy. A teacher then bought the items and shared them amongst the pupils. These activities are engaging and there is scope for this approach to be expanded.

You and the school's teachers now have meetings to discuss the progress that pupils are making. Teachers are now more aware of the importance of progress data and they are expected to take actions to address any underachievement seen. Subject leaders have been given more time to review pupils' progress in their areas across the school.

Governors have responded well to the challenges the school is facing. They have written an action plan which has helped them focus on addressing the school's priorities. Two governors with educational experience have visited the school to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers' marking, the presentation of pupils' work and the progress of those pupils who have special educational needs. Governors have had training in better understanding pupil progress data, particularly relating to the achievement of those children who are eligible for pupil premium funding. The chair and vice chair of governors are both undertaking training in effective governance which is provided by the National College of Teaching and Leadership. All of these initiatives have contributed to the governing body being more effective than at the time of my last visit. Governors know what is needed to improve the school, and they are capable of holding you and your colleagues to account.

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

A representative of the local authority has provided effective support, particularly in evaluating the quality of teaching. This was carried out through a series of lesson observations and by scrutinising pupils' books. The local authority representative identified that the presentation of pupils' work needed to improve and you have successfully addressed this. You now have a valid, external view on the quality of teaching, and necessary areas for development have been identified. For this insight to be most effective, you need to ensure that you conduct more regular observations of teaching and support teachers to improve their practice where this is necessary.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector