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2 July 2014

Mrs Alison Anscomb
Headteacher
Claremont Primary School
Claremont Road
London
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Dear Mrs Anscomb

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Claremont Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 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 the deputy headteacher, representatives of the governing body and the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I looked at a range of work in pupils' books with your year group phase leaders and conducted a tour of the school. I also scrutinised achievement evidence, notes of meetings and monitoring records.

Context

Since the last inspection you have attempted to recruit an assistant headteacher. You chose not to appoint and intend to re-advertise this post shortly. The governing body have completed an external review of governance. You have established links with successful local schools to help improve teaching. These links are also beginning to create more opportunities for pupils to develop their basic skills.

Main findings

You have acted swiftly to adapt your plans for improvement following inspection. The timescale of your plans, coupled with more frequent checks on teaching, are instilling a sense of urgency in the school community. You know that some groups of pupils are not achieving as well as others. You have made sure teachers think about this when they plan lessons. However, your written plans do not pinpoint how you expect these gaps to be closed.

The school's own tracking indicates more pupils are now making expected progress. You expect more pupils to leave the Early Years Foundation Stage at a good level of development this year. However, achievement, particularly in writing, is still not good. There is too much variation in how quickly pupils are acquiring the necessary skills. The targets you have set in your plans are not always ambitious enough to underline the pace of improvement required.

Phase leaders are involved in planning for improvement and checking on teaching. They are at different stages of development as leaders and benefit from opportunities to work together. They have a key part to play in making sure plans for improvement make a difference to pupil progress. This is all the more important in the interim before you appoint an assistant headteacher.

You have arranged training which matches the areas for improvement well. For instance, the 'Every Child a Talker' programme is being used to help staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Consequently, they are making better use of the time they spend talking to pupils. Teachers know what you expect to see improve as a result of training. However, leaders do not always focus precisely enough on what difference this is making when they check on teaching.

The teaching we saw together indicates that the improvements you have planned are being inconsistently applied so far. Some teachers expect pupils to answer them in complete sentences when they speak. They make sure rich vocabulary is included in their own speech. They encourage pupils to experiment with exciting word choices. However, in other lessons teachers accept one word answers to potentially effective questions. Some classrooms are also not rich enough in good examples of pupils' written work on display. Pupils are enthusiastic about responding to marked comments. They are now being given time to improve their work when they receive

written advice. Comments are not often demanding or explicit enough to make the most of this.

I spoke to some pupils who were enjoying the challenge of their writing tasks. More able pupils in Year 4 were able to work on refining the structure of a report they were writing about The Blitz independently. Pupils in a Year 5 class were being asked to think very carefully about a poet's choice of vocabulary. This quality of challenge and expectation is still the exception rather than the rule.

Governors have been galvanised by their recent external review after what they describe as a period of turbulence. They have a realistic view of the school's position. More recently appointed governors are bringing new skills and perspectives to the table. The governing body trust school leaders and are beginning to use their growing expertise and confidence to ask skilful and challenging questions of them.

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 knows the school's strengths and weaknesses well. It has used this knowledge to assist you in developing your plans for improvement. The local authority is providing support to leaders as they check how teaching is improving. It has also provided guidance on how to develop the skills of adults working in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This work is contributing to improvements in children's learning through talk. Successful local schools are providing opportunities for some of your teachers to learn from their good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector