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Geraldine Pugliese
Headteacher
Tividale Hall Primary School
Regent Road
Tividale
Oldbury
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Dear Mrs Pugliese

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tividale Hall Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 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 month and year. 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:

- arrange a review of governance as soon as possible so that governors' training needs are identified and met urgently
- review all job descriptions so that those members of staff in receipt of allowances have suitable responsibilities delegated to them
- review provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that there is a clear focus on children's learning and progress

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, a governor and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A timetable of training was seen together with outcomes of recently introduced monitoring records. I viewed lessons with you informally as part of a tour of the school.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection which judged the school to require improvement you have taken up your appointment as headteacher. Nine members of staff will leave the school at the end of the summer term. The Chair of the Governing Body resigned his position and has since been replaced. Due to unfortunate delays in advertising the post of assistant headteacher, this post, planned for September, is unlikely to take effect before January 2015.

Main findings

You have taken swift and effective action to resolve the weaknesses identified in the previous section 5 inspection. Since your appointment, you have successfully managed an unsettled period within the school. You have expressed clear, uncompromising and appropriately high expectations of staff and pupils. You have shown tenacity and determination in laying the foundations for a good school. You quickly recognised the pupils' potential and investigated reasons for their average, rather than excellent, standards. You have identified both strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and quickly established procedures for monitoring and feeding back to staff.

You have interrogated the roles and responsibilities of those members of staff with allowances and identified anomalies as well as potential strengths. Job descriptions are under review because they do not currently reflect the usual range of devolved leadership responsibilities expected of such levels. You are aware of the necessity to link the standards achieved by pupils with the quality of teaching. You have established a culture of no excuses and teachers are increasingly aware of their accountability in ensuring pupils' accelerated progress and achieving standards of which they are capable. You managed initial problems with the behaviour of a small group of pupils with determination and sensitivity so that they received both the boundaries and support they needed.

You have introduced checks on the quality of teaching which rightly include an appropriate breadth of evidence, for example, pupils' progress, lesson observations and pupils' work. Future plans for these regular checks sensibly extend to the scrutiny of lesson plans and discussions with pupils. You have provided training and systems to help teachers judge, record and track pupils' progress more accurately. Informal visits to classrooms and lessons showed that there is much work to be done in creating classrooms which are orderly and assist focused learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage in particular had a cluttered, unstructured appearance where children were not always suitably engaged in learning. The outside environment has the potential for exciting learning but it is littered with unsuitable equipment. Too many outdoor resources are poor quality and are inappropriate for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

You have worked closely with middle managers and planned a range of joint activities to support them in their role, raise expectations and develop expertise. You have initiated an appropriate sense of ambition and the coordinator for special educational needs is keen to establish routines for pupils to depend less on additional support and develop the necessary skills within their classes.

You have produced a clear plan for creating a good school. You have included all of the areas identified for improvement identified in the inspection report. The planned actions are suitably succinct, appropriate and clear. They include an appropriate balance of training, support, procedures and strategies. You are clear that policies not only have to be written but they also have to be implemented consistently and reviewed regularly. There is a good balance of planned training for the whole staff and small groups or individuals. Each planned action has a clearly identified person responsible to lead and groups to monitor, evaluate and review the school's progress. Overarching expectations are suitably broken down to required, measurable outcomes. All of the activities are sensibly spread over time so that there is a balance of urgency and long-term initiatives. Reviews of early actions have begun and the plan is regularly updated in response. Training and the introduction of new procedures have focused on improving the quality of teaching and accelerating pupils' rates of progress. Good practice has been identified in other schools and visits are planned.

In the past, governors have not taken advantage of the wealth of training provided by the local authority's governor services. The local authority's school improvement advisor has not previously been invited to train governors. She now plans to provide the much needed training in reading and analysing published comparative data on pupils' standards and progress. A formal review of governance is planned in the near future. There is an urgent need for this review to identify governors' training needs in order to better fulfil their statutory responsibilities.

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

You have identified training providers and available support from within the locality, including the teaching school alliance. You have secured scholarships for four middle leaders in developing their management skills. The local authority has provided suitable support during the early days of your appointment. The school improvement advisor joined you on a 'Getting to Good' seminar, and has attended your governing body meetings at your invitation. The advisor remains flexible to best meet your immediate and future needs. She has every confidence in your ability to lead the school and bring about the necessary improvements.

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

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway
Her Majesty's Inspector