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18 July 2014

Miss Christine McKay
Headteacher
Canterbury Nursery School and Centre for Children and Families
Basil Street
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD5 9HL

Dear Miss McKay

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Canterbury Nursery School and Centre for Children and Families, Bradford

Following my visit to your school on 17 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 April 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During my visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy Headteacher, the headteacher of the supporting school, the Governing Body, and representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plan, documents relating to school improvement and the latest pupil performance information were discussed and evaluated. Observations were undertaken in the nursery, staff and children were spoken with and children's work looked at.

Context

Since the inspection leaders have combined the separate nursery classes into one large class and refurbished the setting to enable teachers and other practitioners to work as a cohesive team. The centre has also had another inspection of the early year's provision.

Main findings

Leaders, supported by the local authority and partner school have drawn together an integrated action plan that takes account of the areas for development in all aspects of the centre's work. The plan is focused on the areas for improvement from both the recent inspections of the nursery and early years, as well as the previous children's centre inspection.

As a matter of priority, leaders have acted to address the safeguarding concerns from the Early Years inspection and have involved all staff from the children's centre, early years and the nursery school. This has sharpened procedures and staff are being held to account more rigorously for this. Safeguarding is now a standard agenda item at governing body meetings and governors are clear about their statutory duties.

The deputy Headteacher has led the improvement of teaching with renewed vigour and a clear sense of purpose. Changes to the physical environment for three and four year olds have supported the re-structure and training of the team. These changes have raised the morale and confidence of many staff, who plan and work more cohesively and see the value of learning from each other and from staff at the partner school. A much larger proportion of children than seen previously are now well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The checks on teaching over time and the accuracy of assessment have become more rigorous. The deputy headteacher has drawn upon the support of the local authority and partner school to ensure she has a more accurate view of the quality of teaching and how this is impacting on pupils' progress. She is checking more closely on this by looking at children's work, with a particular focus on writing and mathematics.

Staff with new or changed leadership responsibilities are undertaking training to equip them to carry out their roles. This is helping to bring the team together. There is a clearer structure to hold staff to account and this is supported by revised systems and procedures for managing performance. Staff say this is providing them with the support and challenge they need.

Governors acknowledge that improvements are still needed in order to effectively challenge leaders and hold them to account. The local authority has increased the level of challenge to governors and this, together with the two recent inspections, has toughened their resolve to hold leaders to account. They have taken some positive steps to agree and fund changes that are starting to make a difference.

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

After the second requires improvement judgement for the nursery and the recent inadequate judgement for early years, there is an urgency from the local authority that the pace of improvement must be increased and that to achieve this, leadership must be of the highest order. The local authority is in the process of reviewing the senior leadership of the centre. It has taken action to increase its challenge for both aspects of the centre's provision. It has set up a School Standards Management Group that is ensuring leaders, including the governing body, are held to account more robustly for the quality and effectiveness of this provision.

Work with a partner school, Little Town Junior, Infant and Nursery school in Kirklees has been effective in helping the deputy headteacher to secure a number of notable improvements within the setting in a relatively short space of time. The pace and rigour of the actions undertaken indicate how seriously the school has taken the second requires improvement judgement.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer

Her Majesty's Inspector