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James Yellop
Headteacher
Heage Primary School
School Lane
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Dear Mr Yellop

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Heage 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 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. The school should take further action to:

- sharpen up the monitoring activities in the school development plan so that more stakeholders, especially governors, can take an active part in monitoring the work of the school
- further develop consistency in good classroom practice across the school, especially in marking and feedback and the presentation of pupils' work
- strengthen governance further by developing links with governing bodies in other school so that governors can learn from best practice.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the acting deputy headteacher, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and one other member, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I conducted a telephone interview with the school improvement representative from the local authority. I evaluated the school development plan and the latest pupils' achievement data. I visited classrooms with you and the acting deputy headteacher, during which pupils were spoken with informally and pupils' work in books were examined.

Context

Since the recent section 5 inspection there have been no significant staffing changes. Four new members of the governing body have been recruited.

Main findings

You have acted quickly to address the specific areas for improvement which were set out in the last section 5 inspection. The school's development plan has been appropriately amended, which cites detailed actions the school will take to tackle all the areas weakness; it rightly focuses on developing teaching practice at its core through a range of continuous professional development opportunities. However, how the plan is going to be monitored is not detailed enough and does not involve key stakeholders such as governors sufficiently. This omission reduces the effectiveness with which governors can hold school leaders to account.

Development work undertaken to date has resulted in considerable improvement in pupils' achievement at all key stages; for example, at Key Stage 2 pupils are now either close to or exceeding national expectations for expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In addition, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest levels has risen sharply. This represents a marked improvement compared to previous years and is testament to the hard work and clear expectations set by you and other leaders.

Your 'outward looking' approach to school improvement has been used to good effect; by drawing on good practice from other schools, you have raised expectations and developed good strategies such as the use of learning journals and pupil friendly targets in pupils' workbooks, to further improve outcomes for all pupils across the school, especially in literacy and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is improving; there is a whole school marking and feedback policy which is adhered to successfully by most teachers but not all. Pupils report that they find the 'DIRT' (Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time) time helpful to their learning. However, this aspect of teaching is carried out with varying degrees of success by teachers. You and the acting deputy headteacher recognise

that work to embed greater consistency in teaching practice across the school is a priority area for further development.

You have created a strong ethos that promotes greater personal development of pupils through the 'SMART' (smile, magical, achieving, respect, teamwork) acronym. This has resulted in improved pupil engagement in lessons and increasing pride shown in the work they produce, although this is not always consistently good in all classrooms. You report that there are increasingly more positive behaviours shown by pupils, for example, participation rates at extra-curricular clubs have increased. You plan to develop this further next year through the introduction of the 'learning passport', which aims to record all positive pupil behaviours and reward good achievement.

Governors have strengthened their role; they have taken important steps to review their effectiveness and audit members' strengths in order to restructure how they support and challenge the work of the school. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, along with other experienced members of the team, have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They recognise that they should play a greater role in monitoring the work of the school and value opportunities to work with other governing bodies from other schools to learn from best practice.

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 school is well-supported by the local authority, who have provided a range of valuable training and consultancy opportunities for classroom teachers and school leaders. This has contributed to improved quality of teaching and expectations across the school. Important partnerships have been established with a local 'good' school, which provides further opportunities to share good practice and validate current assessments of pupils' work.

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector