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12 September 2014

Mrs V Yates
Headteacher
Hylands Primary School
Benjamin Close
Romford
RM11 1DA

Dear Mrs Yates

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hylands Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 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 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I met with representatives of the governing body and school phase leaders. I also had a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. The post-inspection action plan was evaluated. I conducted a tour of the school with you and your deputy. I looked at some pupils' books from the previous school year and a sample of records from governor and pupil progress meetings.

Context

Since the last inspection, one teacher has left the school and you have appointed a newly qualified teacher. You have appointed a part-time qualified teacher and four additional support staff. You have redeployed some phase leaders to different parts of the school.

Main findings

Your plans for improvement cover all the areas identified at the last inspection and set out an appropriate programme of development. They provide phase leaders with the time and training needed to help them make regular and robust checks on pupil progress. However, your plans do not yet explain precisely enough how quickly and extensively you expect actions to improve achievement. Plans to involve your partnership school in the further development of phase leader's skills do not explain exactly how you will know these are bringing about the desired improvements.

Middle leaders have a secure knowledge of pupils' achievement in the phases they lead. They can identify the impact of improvements they have led. For example, the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has led revisions to assessment methods. This has allowed staff to use their time more effectively.

The school's data, and your own analysis of this, shows that achievement at the end of each key stage improved in 2014.

Pupils' books show you acted promptly to ensure teachers improved their marking. As a result, pupils are getting more precise guidance on how to improve their work. The best comments explain why praise is given and tell pupils how to respond. You are also insisting that teachers now plan time for pupils to act on these comments. This is already helping pupils to think more deeply about their work.

The improvements you have introduced to make sure harder work is set for more able pupils are too new for much impact to be seen yet. However in most classes we visited there were examples of pupils being given opportunities to explore their ideas and opinions in greater depth. For instance, several classes were displaying their written interpretations of the personality of a character pupils were discovering in a novel.

You are giving prominence and status to writing through a 'writer of the week' competition. However, nearly all of the writing completed in the last school year has been removed from display. As a result children beginning their new school year cannot yet see many good examples of what they might eventually achieve.

Your partnership with a successful local infant school is helping you drive the improvement of teaching. Teachers are able to pair up so they can plan and teach lessons together then evaluate the impact these have had on learning.

Governors can speak authoritatively and accurately about the achievement of groups of pupils. They attend pupil progress review meetings. Minutes of their own meetings indicate that governors are confident at asking challenging questions of leaders and holding them closely to account. They have used the training received from the deputy headteacher on the use of data to help them understand the profile of achievement across the whole school.

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

Representatives of the local authority have worked closely with you to help develop your plans for improvement. Their involvement in progress review meetings has given the local authority a well-informed and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have also supported the creation of a partnership with a successful local infant school.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector