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16 September 2014

Anita Wilcox
Headteacher
Dover Park Primary School
Dover Street
Ryde
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Dear Miss Wilcox

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dover Park Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 June 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 ensure that:

- wherever possible, the success of action taken to improve the school is judged according to its effect on pupils' progress
- the governors' pay policy recognises the importance of checking pupils' progress when making decisions about teachers' pay.

The local authority should take further action to ensure that:

- the work of the mathematics and English consultants in the school is led by the specific areas for improvement identified in the inspection report

- the local authority “strategy group” makes consideration of pupils’ progress a central feature of its judgments about the school’s improvement.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you and with the deputy headteacher. I also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone. I examined the school’s improvement plans, records of staff training and meetings, local authority reports and governors’ minutes. I considered information about pupils’ achievement and checked the school’s record of employment checks. I toured the school with you and spoke with some of the pupils we met.

Context

Since the inspection three experienced teachers have joined the school, replacing staff who left during the last school year. One of these appointments is permanent, one is a secondment from another local school, and the third is for a fixed period. The school continues its transition to one class in each year group. Two mixed-age classes remain, each including pupils from both Year 4 and Year 5.

Main findings

Information about pupils’ achievement in the last school year, which became available after the inspection, confirms the improvement in the school which you have already secured. By the end of Reception Year, significantly more children than in previous years achieved a good level of development. At the end of Year 2, more pupils than in previous years achieved the expected national standard, having made good progress during Year 1 and Year 2. This included a number of pupils who caught up after under-achieving in the Reception Class. In Year 6, the proportion of pupils who achieved the nationally expected level in reading and writing increased compared with previous years, and more pupils achieved higher than the expected level in mathematics. This means that at each stage, pupils at the school are now being better prepared for the next phase of their education.

As the local authority representative told me, you “hit the ground running” after the inspection, continuing without a pause, your drive to improve the school. Before the summer term ended, you made sure that teachers checked their assessments with one another, and then you verified the accuracy of this information for yourself, with other senior leaders. You provided focused staff meetings on topics related to the inspection findings and you met with individual teachers to discuss the progress of their pupils and the quality of their teaching. You ensured that other leaders in the school accessed relevant training and support in preparation for the new school

year. You held purposeful meetings with the different staff groups to share and promote the requirements of the school's improvement plan. This has ensured that everyone is working to the same aims. You arranged for senior leaders to attend an Ofsted briefing about mathematics, which they found very helpful. An Ofsted English briefing is booked for later this term.

You have introduced a suitable electronic system for recording and analysing pupils' progress. Helpfully, this will enable everyone who needs to, to see the progress pupils are making from their different starting points. You provided prompt training for staff in this new system at the start of the term.

At the same time, you have maintained the important initiatives started before the inspection. This includes a focus on clear "non-negotiables" for teaching, the introduction of better information technology facilities and continuing improvements to the premises, so that all pupils can learn in the best possible environment. You have further developed the special provision for pupils who experience emotional difficulties, and the valuable support which the school provides for their parents. You have taken steps to develop greater staff expertise in teaching English as an additional language, to meet an increasing need in the school. You have continued to develop creative partnerships with neighbouring schools, including the current secondment of an experienced teacher and shared work to improve teaching and pupils' attitudes to their learning.

The improvement plan you have devised is focused, purposeful and ambitious. It properly addresses each of the areas identified for improvement by the inspection, setting out relevant actions. It helpfully shows the roles and responsibilities of staff and governors, the support and training that will be provided, and the dates by which you expect to see actions delivered and improvement achieved. The plan is strong. However, more use should be made of information about pupils' progress to measure success. You have also set out a clear programme for the school's leaders this term. Appropriately, this includes observing teaching, checking pupils' work, speaking with pupils about their learning, discussing pupils' progress with individual teachers, and suitable leadership training.

Governors know the school well, and rightly share the headteacher's optimism and ambition for the school. They receive accurate, regular reports from the headteacher, helpfully structured according to the Ofsted inspection framework. A detailed schedule of meetings is already in place for the term, and a wise decision has been made to reconstitute to a smaller Governing Body, to increase efficiency. Clear records of meetings show that governors ask intelligent and searching questions of school leaders. Governors have accurately assessed that they need straightforward information about pupils' progress, and the deputy headteacher is working to provide this. Recent staff changes mean that governors are now in a

position to make decisions about teachers' pay based on the progress pupils make, and they should ensure that the school's pay policy allows for this.

External support

The local authority has provided relevant and wide-ranging support, much of it at no charge to the school, and this is planned to continue. A helpful audit of the school's English teaching and useful advice about assessment in the Reception Class were provided in June. At the start of term, the local authority provided practical training to improve the teaching of mathematics and to help teachers plan the right activities for pupils working at different levels in the same lesson. The local authority is providing an external review of governance, led by a qualified person, later this half term. A regular "strategy group" meeting is convened, when senior officers review the school's improvement with the headteacher and members of the governing body. However, these meetings do not look closely enough for evidence that pupils' progress is improving. The local authority English and mathematics consultants have provided individual action plans to steer their work in the school, but neither of these documents relates closely enough to the specific areas for improvement listed in the inspection report.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector