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10 September 2014

Ms Darra McFadyen
Interim Headteacher
Monteagle Primary School
Burnham Road
Dagenham
RM9 4RB

Dear Ms McFadyen

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Monteagle Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 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 January 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:

- extend the action plan to cover at least this academic year and include interim check points and measurable success criteria so that leaders can check how quickly the school is improving
- ensure teachers provide clear explanations of tasks and useful resources to pupils to help them work more confidently
- ensure that teachers help pupils improve the presentation of their work, write with greater accuracy and are taught strategies to help them when they are unsure of spellings.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, staff with posts of responsibility, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions being taken to improve the school. I

spoke with pupils during the school day and in a meeting at lunchtime to discuss their work. I also spoke informally with a few parents at the end of the school day. I evaluated your post-Ofsted action plan and reviewed other relevant documentation. I joined you on a tour of the school, making brief visits to most classes to look at the impact of actions to improve teaching. I also made a short visit to the additional resource provision with one of your deputy headteachers.

Context

Since the last inspection seven teachers and one teaching assistant have left the school and been replaced by new staff. One of the new teachers is taking on responsibility for curriculum development. You have been in post as interim headteacher since the last inspection. Two governors have been co-opted to the governing body.

Main findings

You have worked with commitment and determination to lead improvement across the school. While still new in post, you rapidly secured the confidence of your senior leaders and built a shared vision for improving the school. As a team you have written an effective action plan. It is focused on the areas for improvement identified in the January 2014 Section 5 inspection. Actions are well thought through and appropriately sequenced to improve pupils' achievement. You rightly recognised the need for rapid action and short time scales, focusing the plan on the second half of the last academic year and start of this one. However, for some actions, such as improving reading across the school, the timescales are too ambitious. The plan does not give sufficient detail about the intended impact of the actions during this academic year. There are not enough interim checkpoints to help you, leaders and staff check how quickly the school is improving. The plan includes strategies for monitoring the quality of teaching and there are early signs that this is working well.

The quality of teaching is improving as a result of targeted support for teachers and whole school training. Teachers are taking a more collaborative approach as a result of a common approach to planning lessons. Teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. They are planning lessons which provide pupils of all abilities with well-matched and more challenging work. However, in some lessons teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient clarity about what they need to do or provide pupils with sufficient resources to support their learning. As we saw pupils are not always able to tackle tasks with confidence or rapidly enough.

Across the school progress is improving. End of Key Stage 1 and 2 test results in 2014 are better than 2013, with more pupils attaining the higher levels in almost all subjects. The gaps in achievement between pupils receiving additional support and their peers significantly narrowed in reading and writing and improved in mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining a good level development by the

end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2014 doubled. However, you and your leaders recognise that the school must make up for the past underachievement in Years 3, 4 and 5.

The quality of pupils work is improving and teachers recognise the importance of developing language and vocabulary. However, teachers are not consistently encouraging pupils to present work well, write accurately and develop strategies of how to spell a word when they are unsure. In all of the lessons we visited pupils were keen to learn. Pupils are fully aware of the new behaviour management approach 'stay on green' and say that behaviour is improving. Staff are consistently using the new marking policy and understand why this is so important to improving the school. Pupils of all ages have a clear understanding of how it works. They are now routinely making use of and responding to teachers' comments. This is helping pupils to be more involved in their learning and make better progress.

Systems for the performance management of teachers are much simpler with clear targets linked to the school priorities and pupils' progress. There is greater accountability at all levels and higher expectations for the quality of teaching and pupil progress. Training for staff is meeting individual development needs and providing guidance to strengthen the work of phase and subject teams.

Governors are proactive. They have strengthened the governing body by reviewing their collective expertise and sought additional governors to bridge specific gaps in knowledge and skills. They have undertaken training to help them hold the school to greater account. The minutes of meetings show that they are providing greater challenge to school leaders. Each governor is now linked to a key area of the school and expectations for monitoring and reporting to the governing body have been established.

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

External support

The local authority adviser has worked with you on a regular basis and has a good understanding of the school. She has supported appropriately some of your development work, such as the new and very effective behaviour management system. She has brokered suitable support both from local authority consultants and other schools to help you improve the use of data about pupils' performance. An external review of teaching took place in June and the outcomes from the review are helping you set specific priorities to improve teaching. Training for the five assistant headteachers by leaders from another school is developing their leadership and management skills. This is helping them to provide more effective support to staff and ensure greater accountability for teaching across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector