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19 September 2014

Mr Ashley Eastwood
Principal
Thorpe Greenways Junior School
Greenways
Southend-on-Sea
SS1 3BS

Dear Mr Eastwood

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thorpe Greenways Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 18 September 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders and members of the governing body. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. We jointly observed teaching and learning in nine of the classes.

Context

Since May, the school has undertaken a root and branch reform of its leadership structure and curriculum. You continue as Principal, with strategic leadership responsibility for both of the federation schools, (Thorpe Greenways Infant and Junior Schools). There are now three Vice Principals and three Assistant Vice Principals working across both schools. They are supported by a senior teacher team

and by teachers in a number of other identified leadership roles. The new curriculum is designed to increase pupils' enjoyment, independence and progress.

Main findings

The 2014 unvalidated test and assessment results for Year 6 indicate that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has improved. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics combined has also improved. While the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 has risen in writing and mathematics it has not increased in reading. The school's own data indicates that rates of progress across the school are beginning to accelerate. As a result, the school has set itself challenging targets for pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

Early indications are that the quality of teaching is improving. Teachers now take greater care to explain carefully what it is that pupils are expected to learn. They have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve and are planning sequences of lessons where pupils' skills are built on and applied. Teachers use carefully directed questions to challenge individual pupils and make sure everyone remains engaged and enthusiastic. Pupils are becoming more confident in selecting their own starting points for problem solving activities. As they become more confident they are choosing to increase the level of challenge they set for themselves. There is a strong emphasis on the development of key skills such as number bonds and multiplication tables. The school has sharpened its focus on the practical application of these skills to real life situations, such as using conversion tables when working with money or weight.

The quality of marking was not consistently good at the time of the last inspection. Marking and feedback are now much better, with a shared expectation that teachers' comments will be acted on promptly. Pupils' books indicate that this is happening and that their work is improving as a result.

Part of the reason that the quality of teaching is improving is the school's very strong commitment to a coaching model. This involves members of the senior leadership team, senior teachers and others demonstrating good practice. As a result everyone knows what high quality teaching looks like, effective strategies are widely shared and there is a real sense of joint endeavour. This has been made possible by significant changes to the school's management structure resulting in more team working and mutual support, but also higher expectations and clearer lines of accountability. There is effective self-evaluation resulting in a detailed school improvement plan. While this reflects many of the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report it is not sufficiently explicit in identifying these so that it can easily be held to account for progress. You are obviously passionate about improving teaching and learning and you are well supported by an enthusiastic and very well informed team of Vice Principals. You have a clear vision for school

improvement. Senior leaders have restructured teaching, learning and leadership in order to realise this vision.

At the time of the last inspection pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning were a strength. This remains the case. Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming. They move around the school quietly and sensibly and work hard in lessons.

Governors know the school well and are keeping themselves better informed. They have decided to extend governing body meetings. Each is now preceded by a workshop session so that they are clearer about how well the school is doing and better placed to make strategic decisions based on what works well. A review of governance has been planned to begin at the end of September.

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 has a close and effective relationship with an outstanding National Support School led by a National Leader in Education in the London Borough of Newham. There is a mutual commitment to school improvement involving a high degree of collaborative working. The school has valued the work of the local authority adviser who is providing good support and challenge and helps the school benchmark its improvements. Additional support is planned from an additional local authority link adviser. The school also works closely with a group of neighbouring schools through the Southend Education Trust to enhance professional development opportunities for staff.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Southend-on-Sea.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector