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Ms G Moody
Headteacher
Whitstable Junior School
Oxford Street
Whitstable
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Dear Ms Moody

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Whitstable Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 14 July 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2013. 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 I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss progress since my last visit. We reviewed the progress made by all pupils this academic year, including scrutinising tracking data and looking at samples of pupils' work. A wide range of school documentation, including records of staff training and evaluations of actions taken to secure improvement, was scrutinised. Minutes of governing body meetings and individual governor visits were also evaluated.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors have been relentless in their pursuit of improvement. A sense of ambition and high expectation abounds. Staff and pupils alike know what is expected of them and understand the school priorities. Morale is high. Pupils demonstrate genuine enthusiasm for their learning. Their views on aspects of school improvement are regularly sought and are apparent in improvement plans. Evaluations of all aspects of school improvement are precisely documented and are highly analytical. Evaluations are successfully used to determine and drive next steps.

The quality of teaching has continued to strengthen. Teachers and teaching assistants are fully aware of their own accountability in ensuring that all pupils learn and progress well and reach their individual targets. Weaker teaching has been robustly addressed and school records indicate that the significant majority of teaching is consistently good or better. Teachers and support staff have undertaken training directly linked to areas for improvement during the course of the academic year. For example, teaching assistants now demonstrate expertise in teaching early reading and writing skills. Teachers have increased their expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and resources are more plentiful. Reviews of pupils' progress are held approximately every six weeks. During these meetings a range of evidence including assessment data, pupils' workbooks and an analysis of the impact of interventions are examined. As a result, adjustments are made to intervention programmes or to professional support for teachers to ensure that the better rates of progress are maintained. Senior leaders and class teachers are confident in using data to evaluate the progress of individuals and groups. For example, you have specific analysis of your 'spotlight' groups; the most able, those entitled to pupil premium funding and those with disabilities and special educational needs. This analysis is used to demonstrate the impact of actions and interventions as well as to ensure resources are precisely focused where they are most needed.

School tracking data demonstrate that throughout the school rates of progress and levels of attainment have improved. All of the higher achieving pupils have made at least expected progress. Pupils currently in Year 6 have made rapid progress and around one third are working at the higher levels in English and mathematics. Whilst pupils in Year 5 have made steady progress in making up for previously lost ground, progress in Year 4 has been somewhat uneven with progress in reading lagging behind that in writing and mathematics. Throughout the school, pupils' workbooks reveal a substantial quantity of work being completed to a significantly higher standard. Detailed marking provides effective guidance to pupils about what to do next to improve their work further. The quality of feedback to teachers, following monitoring is direct. Consequently, teachers are clear about their own areas for improvement and how to access support.

The governing body has undertaken a review. Collectively, governors possess a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They know what they are doing, how and why. All governors bring relevant expertise and skill to their roles. The newly appointed clerk to the governing body is ensuring that meetings are well documented. Recent minutes record debate as well as challenge being levelled at senior leaders.

Positive relationships with parents have been maintained and further built upon. Staff have a high profile at the school gate and in the playground at the beginning and end of the school day. Newsletters are published regularly and the school website kept up-to-date with a wide range of key information.

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 local authority continues to monitor the school's progress closely. A recent comprehensive review judged the school to have made good, and in some cases outstanding, progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector