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Mrs Helen Headleand
Headteacher
Bramley Sunnyside Junior School
Flanderwell Lane
Bramley
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S66 3QW

Dear Mrs Headleand

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bramley Sunnyside Junior School, Rotherham

Following my visit to your school on 23 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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:

- Secure consistently good progress in all year groups and subjects by ensuring that:
 - pupils, especially the most able, are challenged to explain their thinking when they give verbal answers
 - teachers maintain a precise and explicit focus on the specific skills pupils are developing, give clear explanations of the steps to be taken to secure understanding and check learning through carefully targeted questioning.
- Ensure that the detailed monitoring information gathered about the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching over time is analysed and used to inform a clear strategic plan for improvement.
- Ensure that the school improvement plan is revised to include specific milestones when progress towards targets can be measured and the evidence of impact evaluated. Clarify within the development plan the precise role of governors, senior and middle leaders in ensuring that the actions identified bring about the necessary improvements so that the school is judged at least good at its next inspection.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of other documents were scrutinised, including the results of external tests and teachers' assessments of pupils' progress and performance management information. A learning walk was undertaken with the headteacher, this included brief visits to all the classes in the school.

Context

Three new teachers joined the school in September 2014, two of whom are newly qualified. An additional part time teacher is supporting developments in mathematics in Year 5. The school is fully staffed. Three vacancies exist on the Governing Body.

Main findings

Since the inspection, school leaders have focused on what needs to be achieved to bring about further improvement. Initial 2014 results show that progress is being made in securing better achievement for all pupils, indications are that results are well above 2013 national figures; this is true of pupils' attainment and progress. Outcomes in mathematics, although improved, are not as strong as in other areas. School predictions were largely accurate and this confirms that the school's own processes for assessing pupils are accurate and robust. This is supported by the outcomes of local moderation procedures. In relation to teaching and learning a range of initiatives have begun, a scheme has been implemented to systematically develop pupils' reading and writing. In mathematics teachers were observed using a range of strategies to develop pupils' understanding through talk, encouraging them to express logical and well-reasoned solutions to problems. It is too early to see the impact of these initiatives on pupils' progress.

The school improvement plan focuses on the main areas for improvement from the previous inspection and breaks these down into manageable actions. Although some milestones are in place, it is not sufficiently clear what impact measures will be used to assess the plans success and who will evaluate the progress that has been made. Senior and middle leaders are collecting detailed evidence from a range of monitoring activities but the plan needs to be sharpened so it is clear how this evidence will be used to judge success. It is too early to judge success in several aspects of the plan, but a clear visual indication of the progress made so far would be helpful to governors and school leaders in forming a judgement as to whether the school is on track.

Since the inspection a number of new procedures have been introduced to improve the effectiveness of performance management. Progress towards objectives is now more rigorously monitored and a range of evidence is being systematically collected. Teachers are more prepared for discussions about their performance through a self-appraisal process. There is evidence that appropriate support has been put in place to bring about improvement for teachers not meeting their performance objectives and pay progression has been withheld on occasion. Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the staff, they receive regular information from the headteacher but opportunities for them to observe the work of the school at first hand would help them place this in context. The data from performance management has not yet been analysed so that it can be used to inform strategic decisions.

Middle and senior leadership is developing well, leaders talk enthusiastically about the contribution they are making to school improvement. They point to their work with class teachers on planning, their monitoring roles and the opportunities they have to present their work to governors as evidence of this. Their own professional development is well supported and a number are undertaking accredited courses through the local teaching school alliance. Governors are committed to further improving their own effectiveness and have undertaken work with a National Leader of Governance to this end, they are keen to fill existing vacancies so that they can add to the capacity and range of expertise the school has available. The school is developing leadership capacity at every level through a programme that enables recently qualified teachers to take on responsibility as year leaders.

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 is benefitting from a range of external support. The headteacher is an active partner in the local learning community that meets regularly, this enables the school to work with good and outstanding schools on specific issues, for example the moderation of pupils' work has been successfully completed through this route. The school also has well developed links with Wickersley Teaching School Alliance, through which support from a National Leader of Governance and a Specialist leader of Education has been commissioned, a number of middle leaders are also following accredited courses provided by the teaching school. A local authority consultant visits the school regularly and provides helpful reviews of the progress the school is making.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Storey

Her Majesty's Inspector