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Ian Pattrick
Executive headteacher
Redbourn Junior School
Long Cutt
Redbourn
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Hertfordshire
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Dear Mr Pattrick

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Redbourn Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 1 October 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 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 leaders at all levels are provided with a clear description of their roles and responsibilities for which they are accountable.
- Develop closer links with the infant feeder school to ensure continuity and progression in provision for pupils transferring into Year 3.
- Capitalise on opportunities to check the accuracy of assessment with professionals outside the school.
- Arrange an external review of governance to identify areas of strength and weakness in the governing body's effectiveness.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the executive deputy headteacher, the school's deputy headteacher, English subject leader, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and the school's systems for recruiting and vetting staff were checked. You took me on a tour of the school visiting all classrooms.

Context

Since the previous inspection the headteacher has retired and the Chair of the Governing Body has changed. The governing body is currently recruiting a new permanent headteacher. As a temporary measure, the local authority commissioned you, a National Leader of Education, and the deputy headteacher from Crabtree Academy Trust to press on with school improvement work. The former deputy and two other teachers have left and been replaced. Phase leaders have been appointed to oversee the work of specific year groups.

Main findings

You have instantly demonstrated your effectiveness in injecting rigour into the school's systems and procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning. In addition you have communicated your expectations explicitly to teachers and teaching assistants for the standards you expect to see in teaching and learning. Staff have responded quickly and have already made some adjustments for the better. They have implemented a new approach to marking pupils' work and setting them targets to give them stronger guidance and direction in how to improve. The timetable has been revised to make better use of the available time for learning during the school day so that it is used productively.

Leaders of English and mathematics are having some time away from their teaching commitments to check the quality of teaching and learning across the school that includes opportunities to visit classes and observe teaching at first hand. This places them in a stronger position to make informed decisions about what needs to be done to make the necessary improvements. Through this process staff are receiving feedback on aspects of their work specifying precisely what they need to work on to achieve consistently good and better teaching. It will be important to follow this up by dropping into classes to ensure that changes are implemented quickly. At all levels, leaders have not previously had their job descriptions reviewed so that they are absolutely clear about the roles and responsibilities for which they are accountable. As a starting point, you have sensibly provided them with a checklist of expectations until the job descriptions are fleshed out and agreed formally.

You have written a comprehensive and thorough action plan for improvement that is clearly focused on teaching and pupils' achievement. Deadlines are tight and

arrangements for checking progress against the actions are clear. Governors and school leaders are not used to contributing to action planning but you are developing this as standard practice. Better use of assessment to plan work that is set at the right level of difficulty for all groups of pupils, especially the most able, is high on your agenda. The school has not previously made best use of opportunities to regulate their assessment practice by sharing their judgements about how well pupils are learning with teachers in other schools. In particular, they have not made strong links with teachers in the adjacent infant school to discuss and agree the starting points for pupils moving into Year 3 to ensure that teaching builds securely on what they already know and can do.

The new Chair of the Governing Body is keen to improve the governing body's effectiveness in setting a clear strategy for school improvement and holding school leaders to account. The governing body is beginning to take the right steps to strengthen its capacity to deliver these core functions well. For example, training is helping governors to develop skills in interpreting and interrogating data about pupils' achievement so that they are able to ask the right questions about how well pupils are progressing. An external review of governance is recommended to support the governing body in identifying any gaps that may exist in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities and core functions. The governing body is ensuring that parents are kept informed about the school's progress through regular newsletters from the headteacher and face-to-face meetings.

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 has supported the school well in commissioning an effective interim leadership team to move the school forward quickly until a new headteacher is appointed. Staff are benefiting already from opportunities to see the best practice in other local schools and are already trying out some of the ideas out at Redbourn. Governors are taking advantage of training provided by the local authority. The school belongs to a strong local consortium that aims to support leaders at all levels but has not previously made best use of these opportunities.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector