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6 October 2014

Claire Howarth
Woodside Primary School and Children's Centre
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Croydon
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Dear Mrs Howarth

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodside Primary School and Children's Centre

Following my visit to your school on 3 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 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 all governors develop their strategic overview of the school's work by:
 - quickly implementing the findings in the external review of governance
 - monitoring and evaluating standards more robustly
 - hold leaders to account for raising achievement of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, school leaders, a group of children, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Brief visits were made to classrooms, a sample of pupils work was assessed. A range of documentation was reviewed including records to show monitoring of teaching and learning, pupil performance information and safeguarding records. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection five teachers left the school and seven teachers joined in September, including four newly qualified teachers. Two classes are covered by temporary teachers. There are two new members of the leadership team.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, the executive headteacher and her leadership team quickly addressed the areas for improvement. Leaders recognised that the inspection findings confirmed inconsistencies in staff expectations and in the organisation of teaching and learning. The inspection galvanised senior leaders to insist on consistent practice by all staff throughout the primary school.

Leaders prioritised establishing effective teaching on a daily basis. Whole school training helped staff understand the expected practice in marking, classroom organisation and the quantity and quality of pupils' work. Leaders updated teaching and learning guidance, staff handbooks, marking, assessment and presentation policies. Senior leaders check teachers act on this information by visiting classrooms more frequently, now on a weekly basis, and year group leaders regularly drop-in to lessons and carry out formal observations. Arising from these checks is an agreed target that each teacher must address before the next visit. This rigour and accountability is new. Teachers and leaders say they feel much clearer than previously, about school expectations.

Visits to classrooms show more consistent practice. For example, displays show helpful learning prompts for pupils, resources are tidy and well-organised. Most adults engage effectively with pupils and little time is lost during lesson changes because teachers and children understand what they are expected to do. The inspector noted a standardised approach to assessment. The inside cover of pupils' books show their individual targets and 'learning journey' which plots current attainment to their end of year targets. During visits to classrooms all pupils told the inspector about how this worked. They spoke confidently about what they needed to do to achieve their targets.

Leaders monitor teaching using a wider range of monitoring and evaluation strategies than previously. In addition to classroom visits, leaders use pupils' views about learning, scrutiny of books to assess handwriting, presentation, check rates of progress, as part of their monitoring of teaching. The evidence collected by these checks is scrutinised by leaders and teachers during challenging professional discussions in termly pupil progress meetings. There is robust discussion about how to improve the achievement of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. All teachers and leaders are held to account for closing the attainment gap between these pupils and others. Targets in the school action plan contribute to teachers' performance management.

The executive headteacher acknowledges there is more to do on the journey to be judged consistently 'good.' Scrutiny of work during the first four weeks of term shows too much repetition, particularly in numeracy skills in some classes. Several pages of correct 'ticks' indicate pupils need more challenge. Some teachers' marking provides useful feedback and pupils act on this to improve their work. This is not used enough by all staff. Nevertheless, the emphasis on higher expectations is beginning to show in end of year results. Attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening checks, Year 2 writing and the test results in Year 6 English grammar, punctuation and spelling (EGPS) increased in 2014. Attainment for more able pupils at the higher levels in both Key Stage 1 and 2 is above the national average.

Leaders are successfully improving behaviour. Pupils show positive attitudes and the school feels calm. This is because work matches and interests pupils more than it did before and a new reward and sanction systems is in place. A merit ladder records house points and pupils who always behave are awarded with a special badge for the 'always children.' After consultation parents agreed to an after school detention for Year 6 pupils in readiness for secondary school, but this sanction is rarely used. Pupils told the inspector that they know how they keep themselves safe but some reported feeling anxious during playtimes because the school is larger and more crowded than previously.

Governors are still developing their strategic role and challenge for school leaders. Neither the external review of governance nor pupil premium reviews have yet occurred. These are imminent. It is important that the findings from these reviews are acted upon swiftly so that governors' confidence and skill in monitoring the school's work and that of its leaders is more robust. This element of leadership does not yet match the rigour and determination for rapid school improvement modelled by the school's leadership team.

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 responded quickly to the school's needs after the inspection. A progress challenge meeting with leaders and governors set targets, assessed the school action plan and agreed a package of support and intervention. This includes training for the governing body, literacy support and coaching for middle leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Debono
Her Majesty's Inspector