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14 October 2014

Kate Stuart
Headteacher
Langland Community School
Langland Road
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Dear Mrs Stuart

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Langland Community School

Following my visit to your school on 14 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:

- bring all action planning together into one succinct school improvement document. This is so that leaders and governors can make regular checks on whether actions are completed, and evaluate how well pupils are progressing in their learning.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school's action plan. I scrutinised other school documentation including records of leaders' monitoring activity and information

about pupils' progress and attainment. I joined you on a tour of the school and visited every class, taking the opportunity to talk to pupils and look at their work.

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been several changes to staffing. Three class teachers, two with responsibility for Year 4 and one with responsibility for Year 3, left at the end of the summer term. A part-time teacher in the Nursery, who had been absent, left at the end of the summer term. A temporary teacher, who held responsibility for a Year 1 class, now has a permanent position with responsibility for a Year 4 class. Three newly qualified teachers joined with responsibility for a Year 3, a Year 4 and a Reception class respectively.

Unvalidated data for 2014 indicate that the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which sets the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.

Main findings

There is a clear commitment from you, your senior leaders and governors to continue to improve the quality of education for pupils at the school. The recent inspection has boosted morale, recognising the improvements made in recent times. You and other leaders retain ambition for the school and are keen to maintain the pace of improvement.

You, together with support from the school's external advisor, have written a useful improvement plan. The plan sets out helpful measures linked to each area for improvement. New phase leaders have written useful action plans for their areas of responsibility such as English, inclusion and assessment. However, as these are all separate documents, there is no whole school overview and it is unclear how these relate to school priorities. This makes it tricky for governors to check on whether actions have been completed and to hold leaders and staff to account for their performance. Leaders now need to bring all of these documents into one, more useful plan.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have monitored more closely the quality of teaching. Leaders now undertake a variety of monitoring activities regularly, including lesson observations and looking at pupils' work. Leaders have appropriately refined how they provide feedback to teachers. This is helpful to teachers as they receive detailed and more personalised guidance on how to improve their skills and expertise.

You have made well-judged changes to the way teachers plan lessons. There is now a greater emphasis on ensuring pupils know what they are learning and why. Learning objectives are now shared helpfully with pupils. Despite this, some pupils

still remain uncertain as to how the activities they are completing help develop their understanding. For example, in one lesson seen, pupils were having fun decorating biscuits. They were enjoying the activity and following instructions accurately, but were unclear about how the activity promoted the development of their instructional writing skills.

After a successful trial, leaders have introduced a new way of teaching writing skills in all classes. There is a greater emphasis on allowing pupils to write for extended periods and for a variety of purposes. Pupils enjoy 'cold tasks' where they are encouraged to have a go at writing in an unfamiliar genre. Teachers then provide specific, focused tasks to support pupils in developing their writing skills. This approach is particularly helpful, as teachers adapt the activities to meet the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils are beginning to make better progress in writing. In addition, pupils are now able to identify how their writing has improved. They are developing a better grasp of grammatical conventions and sentence structures. They use these improving skills to good effect when looking at each other's work and offering feedback to their peers.

Pupils receive more useful feedback than in previous terms. Teachers helpfully identify for pupils 'what is working well' and a next step for improvement. As a result pupils are now much clearer on how to improve, particularly with writing skills, and consequently they are making better progress than in the past. The inspector saw examples of helpful feedback, such as pupils having opportunities to practice spelling tricky words or encouraged to make a sentence more interesting by adding colourful adjectives. Leaders have revised the school's handwriting policy. Pupils now have opportunities to practice more often and develop a more cursive script. Pupils appreciate the new handwriting certificates and presentation is improving steadily as a result.

Leaders have introduced a new curriculum and ensured there are more opportunities for pupils to use mathematical and writing skills in other subjects. In a Year 6 science lesson, pupils were motivated to use their understanding of graphs to explain the relationship between insulation and temperature. In addition, more curriculum visits are planned. For example, pupils in Year 5 have recently visited a recycling centre. As a result, pupils' attitudes and engagement in learning is steadily improving.

Governors are very committed to improving the school and have mapped a useful outline of activities for the year ahead. They have appropriately planned training opportunities, including those provided by the local authority. As a result, governors' skills and expertise are improving. Governors have increased their direct involvement making appropriate visits to the school to check on the quality of information they receive. They have correctly identified that monitoring activities need to be aligned more closely to school priorities in order to hold leaders to account more effectively.

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 partnership advisor has supported the school in redrafting the school improvement plan. 'The Targeted Intervention Board', a group made up of school leaders, governors and local authority representatives, meets regularly and provides very helpful advice to school leaders. Visits to the school to check the accuracy of teachers' assessment judgements have been particularly helpful.

The local authority has brokered some potentially helpful support from a local school, Water Hall Primary School. However, this support is not yet having a significant impact as both schools are unclear as to their different roles and responsibilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector