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17 October 2014

Mr J Culley
Headteacher
Easebourne CofE Primary School
Easebourne Street
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West Sussex
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Dear Mr Culley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Easebourne CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 July 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- maintain a strong focus on improving teaching through more regular lesson observations by senior leaders
- ensure that teachers are held accountable for the progress and attainment of their pupils through rigorous performance management.

Evidence

During the inspection I met with you and your deputy headteacher, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. You showed me around the school and we made brief visits to all classes. I reviewed some pupils' work from Key Stages 1 and 2. I evaluated a range of documentation including the school improvement plan, information relating to the monitoring of teaching, information about pupils' progress and records of governors' meetings. I examined the register of suitability checks on staff.

Context

Since the last inspection you have taken up the post of headteacher, starting at the beginning of this term.

Main findings

In a very short time as the new headteacher you have already brought a new sense of purpose which has resulted in a real feeling of looking forward from the whole school community, children, staff and parents.

The improvement plan is focused on the areas for development identified in the previous inspection. It clearly states who is responsible for each action and has sensible timescales. It would be further strengthened by ensuring that all targets are more closely linked to learning and highlight the particular areas of concern, for example the Early Years, boys' learning, reading and mathematics, so that progress in each is more easily measurable.

You and the senior leaders know what needs to be done and have effective plans in place. Teachers now need to be clearer about their responsibility for their pupils' progress and attainment, and how they can create the best opportunities for learning.

You are sensibly working on ways to strengthen teaching and learning by collaborating with local schools, giving teachers the opportunity to plan together and observe each other teach. However, you and other leaders are not doing enough monitoring of what actually happens in lessons so as to move teaching forward as fast as possible.

There is evidence of pupils making better progress. In books pupils have undertaken a reasonable amount of work since the beginning of term and have increased their skills, for example in Year 2 writing. It is good to see that marking has been a focus for staff training. Teachers' comments are more relevant to what pupils are expected to learn, and pupils are beginning to respond well, for example by correcting their punctuation.

Behaviour in class is improving, particularly in lessons where activities and support are matched to pupils' needs and ability. In the Year 6 forest school session, pupils individually tied knots sensitively supported by staff as needed and in the Year 4 symmetry activity, questioning was at the correct level for particular pupils. This improvement is not yet happening in all classes.

Reading is rightly being given a higher priority. The plans to create a completely new library area at the centre of the school in the next few weeks will support your strong message of the importance of reading.

Governors understand the need to support but also challenge school leaders. They appreciate the openness of their relationship with you as headteacher and are now more involved in the day-to-day life of the school. They attend staff meetings and participate in activities in 'governor involvement weeks'. It is helpful that individual governors are now linked to a curriculum area.

As a matter of urgency, governors are arranging a review of governance in collaboration with the local authority, in order to support development of skills. They are aware of the need to act swiftly on the outcomes.

External support

The local authority has begun to provide valuable help for the school through access to subject consultants working on mathematics, reading and general leadership support. The impact of this work is at an early stage.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex and the Diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson
Seconded Inspector