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Miss Jenny Slade
Bradfield C.E. Primary School
Cock Lane
Southend
Reading
RG7 6HR

Dear Miss Slade

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bradfield C.E. Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 September 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:

- develop a sustainable leadership structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's action plan. In addition, I scrutinised other school documentation including records of leaders' monitoring activity. I joined you on a tour of the school and visited every year group, taking the opportunity to talk to pupils about their learning.

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been several changes to the leadership team. At the end of the summer term 2014 the interim headteacher left and the executive headship arrangement with Church End Academy ended. A new interim headteacher started in September. The acting assistant headteacher, with responsibility for a Year 2 class, is absent. Since September, two teachers have been acting as temporary assistant headteachers.

A temporary class teacher with responsibility for Year 6 has left. A part-time job share teacher with responsibility for Year 4 pupils has left. The other job share teacher no longer has a class responsibility. Two newly qualified teachers have joined, with responsibility for a Year 3 and a Year 5 class respectively. A new teacher with responsibility for Year 1 has joined.

The Interim Executive Board elected a new Chair and Vice-Chair in September. In April 2014 an academy order was issued. However the proposed sponsorship arrangement was never finalised. Both the local authority and IEB do not intend to pursue academy status in the future.

Main findings

At the start of the school year, you have established appropriate and helpful systems, raising expectations with staff, quickly and effectively. All senior leaders, including the Chair and Vice-Chair of the IEB, are new to role and this has helped develop a tangible sense of optimism and a renewed vigour, which is focused on improving the school. The school's action plan is comprehensive and priorities are appropriately matched to the areas requiring improvement. The actions identified are suitable and staggered appropriately over the school year. The plan makes it clear who is responsible for implementing the scheduled actions.

Attainment is improving. Unvalidated results at the end of Year 6 and Year 2 show more pupils are achieving age related expectations than in the past. With a determination to do better still, you have set even more ambitious, yet realistic, targets for pupils. Furthermore, pupil targets are informing teachers' performance objectives more specifically than in the past. This is helpful as it strengthens accountability, enabling teachers' performance to link more closely to the progress of all pupils in their class.

Teachers are receiving helpful advice. At the beginning of term you revised the way that teachers plan for English and mathematics. Ensuring teachers plan for all learners appropriately is now higher priority. Teachers are becoming more confident when planning appropriate activities for the most able pupils as well as the lower attaining pupils. This means that work is increasingly well-matched to pupils' starting

points. Additionally, there are regular opportunities for pupils to work in smaller, more focused groups as support from teaching assistants is more purposeful. As a result, pupils engage more readily in questions and answer sessions, helping to develop their understanding more quickly. Furthermore, teaching assistants have had helpful training on how to teach phonics (the sounds that letters make). Consequently, standards in phonics are also continuing to improve.

Well-judged plans to develop teachers' marking are being established but these are at an early stage; you acknowledge that marking remains variable across the school. Some teachers require further support to ensure feedback to pupils extends and challenges their understanding further. Where pupils are responding well, the 'good morning challenge;' a chance to respond to teachers' comments, is helpful at consolidating or extending pupils understanding. You have also introduced higher expectations of pupils' presentation of their work. Guidelines are clearly visible in every classroom; however these are not applied consistently across the school.

You have paid good attention to the school's provision for particular groups of pupils and their specific needs. For example, leaders' own monitoring revealed that some curriculum activities had not always appealed to boys. Now, opportunities are planned that appeal to all. For example, in Year 4, a real life detective visited the class and the pupils responded enthusiastically to producing their very own fingerprints. Consequently, pupils are becoming more enthusiastic about learning.

Leaders are working hard to encourage better attendance. Good attendance is now higher profile than in the past and discussed more openly with families at timely intervals. As a result, attendance is currently well above national expectations. Punctuality has also improved since the previous inspection; however there are still a small number of families who are persistently late.

Expectations of pupils' behaviour are higher. Basic routines, including arriving at school in the morning, filing down a corridor or lining up after playtime, are much improved. Pupils are responding positively; they enjoy receiving rewards which place a greater emphasis on politeness and good manners. The learning environment has also significantly improved. All senior leaders make regular checks and provide helpful pointers to staff. In addition, leaders model these expectations routinely. Attention to detail was evident during the inspector's visit; the headteacher regularly paused, for example, to shut a door to prevent leaves flying in or to simply pick up a coat. This behaviour models high expectations to all.

Although the Chair and Vice-Chair of the IEB have only taken up post relatively recently they have wasted no time in ensuring that members know the school well. Already this term, members have reviewed roles and responsibilities. In addition, members have already carried out several useful visits to the school. As a result, the collective knowledge of members is developing well, enabling robust discussions with school leaders. Because of the uncertainty with academy conversion, leadership

roles have only been offered on a temporary basis. Now members are more certain about the future, it would be helpful to review and settle upon a more permanent leadership structure. The IEB is also considering plans to form a shadow governing body; however, plans are at a very 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.

External support

The local authority is very knowledgeable about the school as the advisor has only recently relinquished her role as Chair of the IEB. This is helpful as the authority has a clear view of which support will be most useful to leaders. Work started at the end of the summer term with a helpful review of teaching and learning, involving checks on the quality of teaching alongside the newly appointed headteacher. The school is receiving robust support as it has only recently been removed from special measures. Progress meetings are held every six weeks to ensure the school continues to improve. Checks to ensure the accuracy of teachers' judgments are useful, as is support for the two newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr

Her Majesty's Inspector