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14 November 2014

Chris Gaffiney
Redbrook Hayes Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Gaffiney

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Redbrook Hayes Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 November 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2013. 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.

Evidence

During my visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with three other school leaders to discuss the action taken since the last monitoring inspection. I made brief visits to classrooms and looked at a small sample of pupils' books. I considered a range of documents including information about pupils' progress and attainment and written records of the checks made by leaders on the work of teachers. A meeting was held with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and with a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the deputy headteacher, two other teachers and four teaching assistants have left the school. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and a new teacher has joined the school. A part-time temporary teacher is teaching one class because the class teacher is absent due to ill-health. Seven of the twelve governors have joined the governing body since the last inspection. A new chair and vice chair have been elected.

Main findings

Your systems for checking the work of teachers are now well established. You and other leaders make regular visits to classrooms, evaluate teachers' lesson plans and look carefully at the work in pupils' books. You keep detailed records of all of these checks and give verbal and written guidance to teachers about how they can improve their work. Currently, you do not record how and when further checks will be made to ensure that the recommended improvements are made.

Training has been provided for teachers and teaching assistants to help them develop their subject knowledge and teaching skills. For example, teachers have had training on teaching problem solving in mathematics and teachers and support staff have attended staff meetings to help them develop their ability to teach grammar spelling and punctuation. Leaders have also updated written guidance for teachers including the marking policy and the policy for teaching calculations. After whole school training, or when written guidance has been updated, leaders make visits to classes and look at pupils' work to check that the agreed changes are being successful in improving teaching and learning.

Leaders responsible for English, mathematics and inclusion are now much more confident about their roles and responsibilities. They are able to talk knowledgeably about strengths and areas for improvements in teaching and have an accurate understanding of pupils' attainment and progress. The inclusion leader recognises that the proportion of pupils identified as having a special educational need is much higher than usual and is reviewing information about individual pupils to check that they are receiving the right support. The inclusion leader is starting to analyse information that is collected about pupils' progress when they have additional help or work on a targeted intervention programme.

You have established effective systems for collecting and analysing information about pupils' attainment and progress. As a result, all leaders and governors recognise that rates of progress are improving, particularly in mathematics and writing. However, they are also aware that attainment remains below average especially in reading and in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Leaders also know that pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium do not attain as well as other pupils in some classes. You are continually evaluating the way the additional

funding is used to help these pupils and are keeping a careful watch on their progress.

The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has improved and the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check rose considerably in 2014, although it remains a little below the average nationally. The reading books provided for younger pupils are not all suitable because they do not allow pupils to practise their developing phonic skills. Leaders and governors recognise that this must be addressed urgently.

The teaching of reading has been given higher priority in the timetable and all pupils have regular opportunities to read with an adult in a group or individually. Teachers recognise that many pupils do not read regularly at home and are using volunteers to read with these pupils. All leaders and governors recognise that there is more to do in order to promote a love of books and develop a culture where reading is highly valued and encouraged. For example, some book corners in classrooms are unattractive and have a poor choice of books. There are few displays around the school which celebrate and share good books and promote reading. Leaders are currently considering ways of raising the profile of reading and are looking at ways of supporting parents to encourage their children to read more at home. School leaders are wisely considering the use of assessments which give a 'reading age' for pupils as well as helping teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' reading skills.

Governors are working extremely hard to develop their knowledge and skills and are beginning to provide a more appropriate level of challenge and support to school leaders. Governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They have attended training so that they are now more knowledgeable about the new curriculum, about arrangements for managing the performance of the headteacher and about how they can check on the impact of funding such as the pupil premium. Further training is planned to help governors compare the achievement of pupils at Redbrook Hayes with pupils nationally. Several governors make regular visits to the school and the Chair of the Governing Body meets with the headteacher each week. As a result, governors are more knowledgeable about strengths and weaknesses in teaching and about leaders' work to improve teaching and accelerate pupils' progress. Governors have worked with the local authority to ensure that there are effective arrangements for minute taking and associated administrative tasks. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's current position; of the improvements made and the areas which continue to require improvement.

External support

The local authority continues to provide appropriate support to help the school improve. The District Manager for Improvement (DMI) visits the school regularly to meet with school leaders and governors, visit lessons, look at pupils' books and check that planned improvements are being successfully implemented. The

headteacher and governors are confident that the DMI knows the school well. The local authority has commissioned support for the headteacher from a Local Leader in Education (a successful headteacher from a high performing school) who has provided helpful advice to the headteacher on issues such as the management of staff performance. The DMI is working with the headteacher to arrange a visit to another local school that has been successful in raising standards in reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel
Her Majesty's Inspector