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5 November 2014

Miss Rachel Smart
Headteacher
Park Road Junior Infant and Nursery School
Park Road
Batley
West Yorkshire
WF17 5LP

Dear Miss Smart

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Park Road Junior Infant and Nursery School, Kirklees

Following my visit to your school on 4 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are now taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- maintain the focus on improving the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress further, particularly for the most able
- press ahead with plans to share key principles of effective practice in teaching and learning.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of teachers and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection and my first monitoring visit. The school improvement plan was evaluated. We visited lessons together.

Context

Since my last visit, there have been major changes to the governing body with the appointment of a new chair and vice chair. Two teachers have left and the leadership team has been strengthened with the appointment of an assistant headteacher with responsibility for key stage 2.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors have reacted positively to the recommendations of the first monitoring visit. The independent review of governance has been completed, the school improvement plan has been improved, procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching have been tightened and staff have received relevant training to improve their practice.

Pupils' current achievement appears to be strengthening as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching. Evidence from pupils' work and the school's own data points to some pupils catching up and making better progress than previously. This better picture has come about because senior leaders have introduced several new strategies to boost pupils' achievement which in turn are leading to improvements in classroom practice. The regular reviews of how pupils are achieving are empowering staff to track the progress of pupils more effectively and plan appropriate support for those pupils who are in danger of falling behind. The monitoring of lessons by leaders has been tightened and now focuses more accurately on the achievement of groups of pupils and whether they are sufficiently challenged in their work. In addition, staff have started to agree some key principles of effective practice in teaching and learning. However, senior leaders are correct in recognising they need to press on with this approach and share good practice more widely across the school.

Nevertheless, in spite of these recent improvements, the end of year data for those pupils who left the school in July 2014 does not indicate an improving trend. The school did not meet the floor standards set by the Secretary of State for education. These pupils did not do as well as their peers nationally, too few reached the higher levels because not enough pupils made better than expected progress, particularly in mathematics. This picture clearly represents the legacy of underachievement, the downside to staffing turbulence and weak provision in the past. Senior leaders are acutely aware that the key to resolving this issue lies in maintaining the focus on improving the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress further, particularly for the most able.

Governance has become sharper-edged. New appointments, in a relatively short period of time have brought a sense of urgency to improving the school. Their early actions are demonstrating a clear understanding of the school's most pressing priorities and a resolve to challenge senior leaders and hold them to account.

Effective steps have been taken to develop the skills of middle leaders in checking on the quality of teaching, tracking the progress of pupils more accurately and planning appropriate intervention for pupils where necessary. As a group, they are increasing their potential to impact more effectively on school improvement.

Pupils' behaviour and their readiness to learn are strengthening further. They say that their lessons are getting better and more exciting. They report that behaviour in class is much improved with hardly any lessons now affected by low- level disruption.

Whilst taking some pride in recent improvements following the previous monitoring visit, the school still has some ground to make up. All parties recognise that much further work is required on the journey to becoming a good school.

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 continues to provide an appropriate level of support and challenge to the school. On-going work through specialist consultants alongside the work of school improvement officers is proving beneficial in building the confidence of staff and in improving provision.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector