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12 November 2014

Mrs Jayne Keller
Headteacher
Heathcoat Primary School
Broad Lane
Tiverton
EX16 5HE

Dear Mrs Keller

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Heathcoat Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 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:

- extend the plans for improving reading and mathematics to show in more detail how some of the targets will be achieved, particularly regarding pupils' achievement at Key Stage 2
- strengthen the ability of governors and senior leaders to monitor the school's progress by adding to the action plan milestones for achieving targets.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. I also toured the school and evaluated the school action plan.

Main findings

Since the section 5 inspection in May, you, your senior leaders and the governing body have taken a range of positive actions to improve the school. You were aware of the areas identified in the report that needed improving and had already begun to tackle them at the time of the inspection. You have galvanised senior leaders into a purposeful team who are introducing improvements with enthusiasm. Much has been achieved in a short time. The action plan covers all the areas identified for improvement in the last report and it is intended that most actions will be completed by the end of December 2014. The plan would benefit from an extended timeline with milestones to help senior leaders and governors gauge the rate of progress the school is making towards being good. Some leaders have assumed their subject responsibilities quite recently. They are aware that plans lack sufficient detail to show how improvements will be achieved in mathematics and reading.

Senior leaders and teachers are using information on pupils' attainment more effectively to set challenging learning targets for pupils. Teachers set aside time each week to discuss with pupils their learning targets and how they might improve their work. Marking is more thorough. New planning for topics in Key Stage 1 is helping to capture pupils' interests and early evidence shows it is helping to raise pupils' achievement. Recent information on pupils' attainment shows a trend of improvement, with pupils at Key Stage 1 making significantly faster progress. In part, this is due to the more consistent teaching of the sounds that groups of letters make (phonics). Weaknesses remain in the achievement of some groups at Key Stage 2 in reading and mathematics, particularly for the more capable pupils. Senior leaders are using data more effectively to check the progress of different groups. They can demonstrate the impact of the pupil premium funding on improving attendance and achievement. The funding has also been used to set up 'Tea and toast' sessions before school each morning which have been successful in engaging more parents and carers in their children's education.

Governors are in a better position to challenge the school's performance and are ambitious for the school's future. The local authority reviewed governance soon after the last inspection. Governors now have specific areas on which they take the lead and they make more frequent visits to the school to view its work first hand. They have a better understanding of how to use information on pupils' progress to raise expectations. Three new members have joined the governing body and have been

provided with suitable induction. An action plan committee meets monthly to review the school's progress. Not all targets in the action plan have sufficient explanation about how they will be achieved. As a result the action plan committee is unable to monitor effectively the progress towards these targets.

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

Governors and staff are receptive to new ideas which might improve their practice and are using a wide range of external support effectively. Teachers have visited another primary school to observe new ways of teaching subjects through topics. This has led directly to changes in the organisation of teaching in Key Stage 1. Staff are now seeking a good school to visit where high quality mathematics teaching can be observed. The school has worked closely with the Tiverton Learning Cooperative, which has promoted shared professional development for teachers with other schools in the area. This development has included strategies for teaching higher attaining pupils and for promoting pupils' early language skills. The local authority has provided support for the governing body and to school leaders, although it recognises that the school has strengthened its capacity to introduce the required changes without a high level of support in the future.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector