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19 November 2014

Mr G Booth
Headteacher
Rickley Park Primary School
Rickley Lane
Bletchley
MK3 6EW

Dear Mr Booth

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rickley Park Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 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 academy should take further action to:

- set targets for the improvements expected in the progress of different group of pupils by key points in the year, so that leaders and governors can see if the academy is on track to meet its longer term targets for improving pupils' achievement.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I scrutinised documents, including the academy's action plans and information about pupils' progress. We briefly visited lessons around the academy to see teaching and learning.

Main findings

You are taking swift and decisive action to improve the academy. This action, is already leading to improvements in leadership, management and teaching. Your comprehensive action plans focus well on tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The plan details the actions to be taken by key points in the year, the change in practice each action should bring and how each will be evaluated. Leaders are following the plan assiduously.

Senior and subject leaders are starting to take responsibility for work that previously you did alone. You are making sure they get the training and support they need to do this. Senior and subject leaders are now required to run the meetings at which teachers are held to account for the progress of their pupils. You have arranged support from a local teaching school to help leaders develop an effective and shared approach. Leaders with the necessary skills and experience now make weekly visits to lessons and look at pupils' work. They identify what is working well and what needs to improve. Less experienced leaders are having training and support to prepare them for this new responsibility, before they carry it out.

You have made several well-considered changes to strengthen pupils' development of reading and writing skills. All pupils in Year 1 and those who need it in Year 2, now have daily phonics sessions. Teachers now use an approach to writing that has been effective in other schools. Pupils doing longer pieces of writing receive shorter and more frequent guidance, to help keep them on track and maintain their focus.

Your teaching and learning policy sets suitable expectations. Teachers receive regular training to help them meet these expectations and make effective use of new approaches that have been introduced. Increasingly this includes teachers sharing good practice with each other. Teachers who need the most support to improve receive individual coaching. Teaching assistants are also getting more development opportunities. They attend whole staff training sessions and are doing a course to help them understand their role better and how to support learning more effectively.

Governors know what needs to improve and how they will hold leaders to account. Their strong understanding of performance data helps them do this well. They have changed the way they work to make sure they focus intensely on improving the academy. The governing body now meets twice a term instead of once and individual governors monitor specific sections of the action plan. These governors visit the academy between meetings to review, in detail, the progress made in the section of the plan they are responsible for. The governing body is keen to be as effective as possible and it has commissioned an external review to help decide the best way forward.

You are now well positioned to improve pupils' achievement. However, your targets for this improvement are not as sharp as they need to be. You have not defined the increased proportions of different groups of pupils you expect to see on track to make expected or more than expected progress at key points in the year. As a result, it is difficult for leaders and governors to check if the progress of each group of pupils is improving as quickly as it needs to.

External support

Before September 2014 the academy received little external support. You are working well to address this. You have set up links with the local teaching school to provide support for leadership development. An Oxfordshire local authority adviser is working with the teachers in the early years provision to review and improve it. She has also helped initiate the changes in phonics teaching in Key Stage 1. An education consultant provides coaching for teachers and the local authority is arranging an external review of governance. You are exploring opportunities for further support with the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton

Her Majesty's Inspector