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Mr Paul Mattausch Burrows
Headteacher
Twerton Infant School
Poolemead Road
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Dear Mr Mattausch Burrows

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Twerton Infant School

Following my visit, with Karen Gannon HMI, to your school on 21 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 May 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 the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, two governors and two representatives of the local authority. In addition, the inspector visited three lessons with the headteacher to observe the teaching of phonics.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, two teachers and two support staff have been appointed to the school. In addition, the membership of the governing body has changed and a new clerk to the governing body has been appointed.

A new purpose-built facility for two-year olds has opened within the grounds of the school.

Main findings

The school's leadership team has focused their improvement strategies on the areas identified in the last inspection report. However, the improvement plan lacks sufficient detail although it provides an overview of how the initiatives are being implemented. The plan does not make clear who has responsibility for leading each initiative; neither does it state who will monitor and evaluate the impact of each action and it does not provide dates when progress will be assessed. These are strategic leadership issues, which have not been addressed successfully by the headteacher. Whilst these issues remain, the work being undertaken in the classrooms provides evidence that the staff are improving pupils' performance.

To support the headteacher, the other members of the senior leadership team have taken on an extensive list of responsibilities. They have also taken a lead in bringing about the improvements seen in the school.

Many of the staff comment that morale at the school is low. Staff at the school cite work overload and a lack of strategic leadership from the headteacher as the key reasons for increased levels of stress and staff absence.

Actions taken by members of the senior leadership team are having a beneficial impact on pupils' achievement. The newly opened provision for two-year olds is already supporting the school's work by better preparing children to join the Nursery class.

The teacher with responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage has developed effective systems for assessing children's performance. As a result, staff have a good knowledge and understanding of each child's development. Similarly, staff in Key Stage 1 track pupils' progress very thoroughly and have a good understanding of pupils' development.

The leader of Key Stage 1 has focused successfully on strengthening the quality of phonics teaching. As a result, the performance of Year 1 pupils in the 2014 phonics check was higher than achieved in 2013. Overall, pupils' results in 2014 increased to be slightly above the national average. Boys achieved as well as girls and disadvantaged pupils' results are only just below other Year 1 pupils. Pupils with special educational needs performed well in the 2014 phonics check.

In 2014, Year 2 pupils achieved well. Pupils' attainment in reading rose to be slightly higher than the results obtained in 2013 and just above the national average. In writing and mathematics, pupils reached standards significantly above average. Importantly, there was also an improvement on last year's results with more pupils reaching the higher levels in writing and mathematics. Year 2 boys did well and reached levels above the national average. However, the girls did even better by out-performing boys in all subjects. Pleasingly, disadvantaged pupils also performed very well in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs also achieved well.

The evidence shows that pupils learn and benefit from the opportunities that are planned for them. The school uses its pupil premium funding appropriately. Eligible pupils benefit from the extra support and experiences that broaden their knowledge and help them to make good progress.

The school's monitoring of teaching has identified the strengths and the areas of inconsistency that need to be improved. As a result, the quality of teaching is strengthening across the school. School leaders use evidence from lesson observations as part of the school's performance management process to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. Leaders' feedback to teachers arising from lesson observations is detailed and has improved.

The key stage leaders have initiated an appropriate focus on raising teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve. Staff have also strengthened the quality of their marking. As a result, pupils have a better understanding of how well they are performing. There is firm evidence to show that teachers are taking great care to record pupils' work and comment on the learning that has taken place. For example, teachers working in the Early Years Foundation Stage have introduced work books that show very clearly the progress children are making.

The Chair of the Governing Body has led the transformation of the governing body. Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have made a significant impact developing and strengthening the work of the school. Governors are increasingly holding the school leaders to account for the quality and impact of their work. Overall, the governors find the quality of the headteacher's reports to be too variable.

External support

The local authority has provided intensive support to improve and strengthen the quality of leadership and management. The local authority's work to strengthen the governing body has been very successful. The decision to engage a national leader of governance to act as a temporary Chair of the Governing Body has led to a much stronger and more effective group of governors.

The local authority's decision to create a new facility for two-year olds at the school is making a significant contribution to children's development in preparation for them joining the Nursery Year. The headteacher supported the project by working with the local authority to design the scheme. The facility is also providing an additional resource for the local community.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bath and North East Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton

Her Majesty's Inspector