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Mrs E Bissell
Headteacher
Oakdale Junior School
School Lane
Poole
BH15 3JR

Dear Mrs Bissell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oakdale Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 July 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:

- sharpen the termly evaluations of school improvement work, by including data headlines on how well pupils are doing, so that governors, senior leaders and staff have a simplified overview of the schools' progress towards becoming good or better.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and your leadership team. Middle leaders joined one of our meetings. At the meetings we discussed the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated with you, the governors and also in the meeting held with two representatives from the local authority. You

and your deputy headteacher took me on a tour of the school, during which time we looked at samples of pupils' written work and mathematics.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection there are a number of staff changes. Some staff have left and new teachers have joined the school. The leadership team has been restructured. The team now includes two teachers new to the school, appointed as assistant headteachers. They lead on English and mathematics. The roles of the two other members of the leadership team, namely the deputy headteacher and the third assistant headteacher, have been redefined. The responsibilities available for middle leaders and those teachers who receive the upper pay scale have changed. Upper pay scale responsibilities are now based on specific actions/tasks which arise from the school action plan.

Main findings

Your work to improve the education for pupils at Oakdale Junior School was recognised at the Ofsted inspection in July 2014. Since that time, you have been even more steadfast in your drive to improve teaching and raise standards. The actions you have taken have, at all times, been based on your determination that all pupils can, and will, succeed. Pupils are making more progress so far this year, as compared to the previous year. This is because you, your leadership team and middle leaders have improving teaching and learning as the priority for the school.

Your actions are successful because you insist and check on consistency. You introduced a set of expectations which are non-negotiable so that all teachers are clear about what you expect. This clarity is helpful for the teachers who are new to the profession, those who are more experienced and those new to the school. For example, you expect that all work is marked in line with the school marking policy. This is making a difference to the quality of feedback given to pupils. It has increased the opportunities for pupils to improve their work. Another example of your expectation is about the progress you expect pupils to make in a lesson and over a period of time. You have made it clear that 'resting on your laurels' is simply not good enough. You expect that all teachers provide tasks which are suitably challenging for all pupils, especially the most able.

The expectations you set are inextricably linked to teachers' performance, revised responsibilities and related pay remuneration. During my visit, I was impressed with the drive for improvement of the senior leaders. Through their sharper monitoring, they place a much greater emphasis on checking that the work set is at the right level. They assess how well pupils achieve and give feedback to teachers, coaching and supporting where necessary.

The two local authority representatives I met have high expectations for the school. They hold you in high regard for the work you are doing to improve Oakdale Junior School. The assistant headteacher, in charge of mathematics, has led training for teachers and teaching assistants. The local authority representative, who supports the school, has contributed to this training. Staff are now using the new entry and exit cards to assess pupils' progress in lessons and over time. This helps teachers raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils are beginning to make better progress in solving mathematical problems. The policy for adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing has been discussed with staff and subsequently re-written. Staff confidence in teaching mathematics has improved, which in turn is improving pupils' mathematical skills.

The assistant headteacher, in charge of English, heads up an energetic team. Consequently, the middle leaders in charge of reading and writing are playing a greater role in checking how well their area of responsibility is taught and how well pupils are doing. Some of the current work we looked at in pupils' English books was of a high quality, interesting in content and very well presented.

The Ofsted report recognised that the governing body was becoming more involved with the monitoring of school improvement, and that this was having a positive impact. Since then, governors have sharpened up their involvement in school improvement. They ask more challenging questions. They check assiduously on the impact of actions taken to improve teaching and learning. However, they currently do not receive termly headline statistical information about the school's performance.

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 school has welcomed the support from a national leader in education who has contributed to the school's evaluation of the effectiveness of the actions being taken.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Neech
Her Majesty's Inspector