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Mrs Beverley Melvin
Headteacher
Great Eccleston Copp CofE Primary School
Copp Lane
Great Eccleston
Preston
Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Melvin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Great Eccleston Copp CofE Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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.

This was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 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:

- review your action plan so it is a useful tool for staff and governors by identifying long term actions, sharpening your goals for measuring success and giving greater weight to improving teaching
- ensure the feedback you give teachers on their performance is crystal clear, relates to pupils' learning and helps them know exactly what they need to do to improve
- make sure all teachers are following the lead of some and that everyone raises their game in what they expect from pupils, in terms of outcomes and presentation during each lesson

- develop the role of new leaders so they are able to make a stronger contribution to school improvement.

Evidence

During my visit, meetings were held with yourself, the deputy headteacher, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I chatted to a small group of older pupils to gain their views on the changes that have taken place since the last inspection. We visited each classroom to observe pupils at work and to look at their books. Your most recent school data, including the 2014 unvalidated results for Years 2 and 6, were considered. I looked at records of your checks on teaching and documentation related to the work of the governing body.

Context

The headteacher has returned from a long term absence. The leadership team has been restructured. An acting deputy headteacher and the subject leader for English took up post three weeks ago. There are three vacancies on the governing body.

Main findings

Everyone found the recent inspection outcome difficult to swallow and not all agree it is an accurate judgement. Nonetheless, you, the staff and the governors have dusted yourselves down and set about making the changes to restore the school to its former success. As a result, time is not being wasted reflecting on what might have been and everyone is looking to the future. The scales are falling from your eyes; you are gaining a much more realistic view of what needs to happen to bring about improvement. You know there is tough job ahead. There is much to do to ensure all teachers capitalise on the good start children get during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage so older pupils make the progress they should for their age and capabilities.

Despite your absence from school following the inspection, you have been very busy. Time has been spent wisely updating policies; reviewing existing systems and securing external support. This is helping to create a firm foundation on which to build future success because it is beginning to secure a systematic approach to teaching and learning across the school.

There is no doubt that your absence did cause a hiatus; progress stalled immediately after the inspectors left your school. This was because no-one got to grips with improving teaching while you were not on the school site. Your return is signalling a change and a far greater sense of urgency. You have hit the ground running and there are some early pleasing signs of impact from the actions you have taken so far. In some classes, teachers are raising their expectations and pupils are working harder and presenting their work much better than they did in the past. Classrooms have been overhauled; they are becoming bright areas with lots of learning prompts and guidance. As a result, pupils are beginning to work without needing the constant

support of adults. You know the system for teaching reading and spelling in the past has not brought about enough success. As a result, this has been completely changed and you are keeping a keen eye on the new way of working to make sure it reaps rewards. Nevertheless, not all teachers are following your lead quickly enough. In some classes, pupils are not expected to always do their best and some pupils are able to get away with doing too little work for their age or ability.

You have restructured leadership roles to ensure responsibility for improvement is everyone's job and does not rest solely on your shoulders. This is still in the early days and only time will tell if this makes enough of a difference. At present, other leaders are not having enough impact in lifting the quality of teaching; they are not providing enough guidance to their fellow teachers and they are not checking the difference their work is making to teaching often enough.

You have changed the way you check on teaching. This is a positive move forward because you are cross checking what you see in classrooms with the work in pupils' books to get a taste of what teaching is like each and every day. This is serving you well and your judgements on teaching are becoming increasingly accurate. You are helping teachers to see what they need to do to raise their game, although the targets you provide centre too much on procedure and not enough on learning. You are checking that teachers are following new policies for presentation and marking. However, you do not always return quickly enough to those teachers who are not quite getting it right to make sure bad habits do not linger. You are gaining a much better grasp of pupils' progress because you have invested in a new data system which helps you see when pupils are lagging behind. Improved strategies are in place to help those pupils who need to catch up swiftly.

You know what you need to do to bring about improvement. However, this is not captured well enough in your action plan to ensure other staff and governors are aware of the journey you will all be taking from now until the next inspection. The action plan is too short term; the goals for measuring success lack precision and there is not enough detail about what will happen to lift the quality of teaching in the long term.

Pupils are articulate and insightful. They say school is beginning to improve, but they agree with the inspectors that the school is not yet good. They say they sometimes struggle in class because teachers do not always explain work clearly enough. They also find it hard to adjust when they move from different classes or groups because teachers do not share the same expectations about presentation, behaviour or the amount of work pupils have to produce. Pupils have a lot of sensible suggestions. However, their views are not being captured well enough to help shape the school's journey to good.

The governing body accept there is a need for change and view the inspection as an opportunity for them to review their effectiveness and raise their game so you are no longer a lone voice in driving change. Governors have set up a monitoring committee to keep a close eye on your progress. They are more in tune with school data so they know what is going on in all year groups and they are in the process of

auditing their own skills to identify what more they need to do to strengthen leadership.

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

You are keen to harness as much support as possible to help you on your journey to good. As a result you have already developed positive links with a local teaching school which is helping you to enhance your skills and the skills of other leaders in checking on pupils' learning. You gleaned a lot from attending a conference led by Her Majesty's Inspectors; you are using some new techniques to lift teachers' expectations and you are making teaching your number one priority. As a result of the inspection outcome you have greater access to local authority support. An officer and a teaching and learning consultant are poised to work with you; a review of teaching is set to happen tomorrow. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work at this point.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and the Director of the Blackburn Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson

Her Majesty's Inspector