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4 December 2014

Mrs Michele Lawrie
The Headteacher
St Peter's Community Primary School
St Peter's Road
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Dear Mrs Lawrie

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 December 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 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 school should take further action to ensure the improvement plan:

- includes clear attainment targets for each class and identified groups of pupils for this year in reading, writing and mathematics:
- provides a clear, practical outline of what will be done to achieve the improvement required in each area identified by the section 5 inspection
- shows how actions will be checked and success measured (including by governors), with reference to pupils' achievement
- features actions to review and develop the operation of the governing body, including terms of reference, and protocols to guide governors' conduct.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, with one of the Co-Chairs of the Governing Body, and with two representatives from the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's draft improvement plan, governing body records, local authority visit reports, and information about achievement targets set for pupils. I considered the school's records of recent staff meetings, training and checks on teaching. I visited all the classrooms briefly, looked at some pupils' exercise books and teachers' planning for what pupils will learn. I also checked the school's Single Central Record of staff employment checks.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing since the last inspection.

Main findings

Since the inspection, you have led urgent work to establish appropriate targets for each pupil's attainment this year in reading, writing and mathematics. Wisely, these have been decided in the light of national expectations for pupils' progress, especially during Key Stage 2. You have scheduled meetings with teachers to discuss the targets, and raised an important expectation that staff will attend fully informed about progress in their class, and ready to discuss how they will achieve the levels set. The charts recording these targets helpfully identify pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils receiving free school meals and those who are looked after), disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language. This will support a higher profile for these pupils when teachers plan, and when leaders check progress.

These targets include suitable challenge for more-able pupils who are already doing well. However, you have not considered sufficiently the inspection finding that some more-able pupils have under-achieved in the past. You have not yet identified these pupils in order to set stretching targets so they can make up for lost ground and achieve the higher levels of which they should be capable.

Sensibly, you discussed the inspection report and action the school should take with staff and governors. The plan you have devised to steer improvement includes broad targets for the rate of pupils' progress. However, it is not clear enough about the attainment expected at the end of the year for each class overall, or for identified groups of pupils who need to catch up. The plan refers to all the areas for action identified by the inspection and considers some of the detailed evaluation in the body of the report. It includes a useful calendar of key activities this term. Nevertheless, it is not clear enough who leads each area, the timescale involved or how success will be measured, especially by governors. You are already taking action not included in the plan, which though useful, risks not being co-ordinated.

You were prompt to ensure that staff meetings after the inspection considered important themes from the report such as assessment and target setting, marking and feedback, what 'good' teaching looks like, and how staff can challenge the most able readers more effectively. However, there is too little evidence in pupils' books that all staff are changing their approach with enough urgency. Some teachers still overlook poorly presented work, and there is not yet evident improvement in the consistency of marking.

While you continue to check teaching regularly with other leaders, you have not adapted this work to consider the particular aspects of teaching which require improvement, or the progress of specific groups of pupils who are underachieving. Leaders' feedback to teachers does not include enough advice about next steps, with follow-up checks to see that these have been implemented.

It was good to see governors considering how to reform their structures and operation to be more efficient, including introducing regular committee meetings specifically to consider information about pupils' progress. Governors are also beginning to develop a useful handbook setting out clearly their corporate and individual roles, and how they (as a group) will hold school leaders to account for the school's rapid and secure improvement. Since the inspection, governors have been conscientious in attending training, wisely making it a priority to develop their understanding of the range of data provided to them, including about disadvantaged pupils.

External support

Before the recent inspection, the local authority was already supporting the school's transition to primary status. In response to the report, the local authority raised the school to high priority, set out a good plan to support and check improvement, and provided prompt advice and guidance, at no charge. The local authority is providing wide-ranging training and support for staff and governors, and has helpfully arranged the partnership of a local, good school.

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

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector