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Mrs Claire John
Headteacher
Springside
Albert Royds Street
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Dear Mrs John

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Springside, Rochdale

Following my visit to your school on 3 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 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:

- sharpen the action plan by giving specific detail about what success will look like, so that leaders can judge unambiguously the impact of their actions on improving the outcomes of all pupils in the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the acting headteacher, teachers, pupils, the Chair of Governors, a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I took the opportunity to tour the school to observe learning. I also scrutinised samples of pupils' work and records of pupils' progress along with various other documents provided by the school.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school since the last inspection.

Main findings

Without a doubt, the number one priority for leaders has been to raise the quality of teaching throughout the school in order to ensure all pupils are challenged, learn well and make good progress. Leaders have worked swiftly with the local authority to produce an improvement plan which gives an accurate overview of the actions required to address the main areas for improvement. However, the actions identified are not linked to clear statements on the intended impact on pupils' outcomes. Consequently, leaders do not have well defined measures to judge success.

Leaders have successfully introduced a structured approach to the recording of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress. Teachers use their assessments of progress to set challenging learning targets in each pupil's individual education plan. As a result teachers and leaders are able to evaluate effectively the learning of individual pupils on a lesson by lesson basis. Analysis of the school's own data shows that pupils who were previously identified as underachieving, are now making better progress.

Teachers make good use of their frequent assessment, along with pupils' individual targets, to modify their planning of lessons. For example, one teacher increased the level of challenge in a reading lesson to move one pupil from reading individual words to matching sentences with pictures. This well-timed adjustment by the teacher resulted in rapid progress being made by this pupil.

Leaders' analysis of whole school assessment data indicates that there are early signs of improvement taking place across the school. For example the increased level of staff training in 'Th.Ink', a strategy designed to meet the needs of pupils who have specific social and emotional problems, has resulted in the rapid improvement of behaviour. The school's own records show that there has been a drop in the number of recorded incidents compared with a similar period before the inspection. While it is too early to judge the full impact of improvements in behaviour on the quality of pupils' learning. Anecdotal evidence gained from talking to adults and pupils indicates that pupils spend more time learning than they did before the inspection.

Leaders' analysis of data has deepened since the inspection. For example adults have focussed recently on the listening aspect of communication following leaders' detailed scrutiny of progress data. Subsequently, leaders have taken the bold action to raise the profile of 'Narrative Therapy Intervention' in order to boost basic skills across the school. Adults take every opportunity available to challenge pupils, especially those with severe disabilities, to communicate in a way that is appropriate to their needs. I observed pupils thoroughly enjoying soft play areas in both a

classroom and a designated room; I observed three pupils responding appropriately to adults as the pupils moved over, in and through obstacles. I also observed three other pupils clearly using eye contact and facial expression to communicate both their joy at and desire for more contact by the adult. While the school's collection of evidence is not yet complete, my scrutiny of the data available compared with leaders' initial analysis shows the rate of progress in communication skills, has increased for the most disabled pupils.

Governors have taken appropriate steps to ensure external reviews of governance and the school's use of pupil premium funds take place in a timely manner. Governors have started to complete an audit of their skills and have set a date at which they will review their findings and plan next steps. The Chair of Governors is aware that swift action needs to be taken in order that all the required statutory reports are made available on the school's website.

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 is being supported well by both the local authority and a number of other schools including that co-located with Springside. The local authority was instrumental in the secondment of the acting headteacher just prior to the inspection and continues to provide support both financially and through frequent involvement in the professional development of staff and governors and the monitoring of progress. The local authority is leading the review of governance and the review of the school's use of the pupil premium grant. Leaders have made effective links with several other good and outstanding schools. As a result leaders' initial assessments of pupils' progress are accurate and provide a secure base from which to measure improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector