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16 December 2014

Shelpa Patel
Executive Headteacher
Woodfield Junior School
Woodfield Avenue
Penn
Wolverhampton
WV4 4AG

Dear Ms Patel

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodfield Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 June 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:

- improve teachers' knowledge of how to teach the technical aspects of writing, in particular grammar
- make sure that teachers correct pupils' grammar and punctuation errors and do not allow pupils' misconceptions to persist
- make sure that teaching across all aspects of reading enables pupils to make rapid gains in their learning.

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and the head of school. A discussion was held with four members of the governing body including the chair and vice chair of governors. I also met with a representative from the local authority. Together, we made brief visits to classrooms. I also looked at the records kept following leaders' checks on the work of teachers and examined the work in pupils' books.

Context

There have been a number of changes since the school's previous inspection. A head of school was appointed from September. Two teachers left at the end of the summer term and two teachers are due to leave at the end of the autumn term. Seven teaching assistants also left at the end of the summer term. One senior member of staff is absent long-term.

Main findings

You have taken some important actions since the school's previous inspection and have:

- developed a well-focused action plan concentrating on what needs most improvement
- increased your visits to classrooms to check on how well teachers are helping pupils to learn
- involved governors further in checking the impact of the school's work
- restructured the use of support staff across the school
- improved teachers' use of questions to deepen pupils' understanding
- gained the confidence of teachers so that they are responding positively to your raised expectations of their performance
- made sure that teachers' use of assessment more accurately reflects what pupils know and can do.

Actions within the school improvement plan are precise and focused. The plan indicates how teaching is to be improved and how pupils are to be helped to make faster progress. Training for staff focuses on the school's priorities, for example improving pupils' writing skills and the feedback pupils receive to improve their work. You are aware that inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour, and are providing further training for staff and support for pupils.

You have established clear expectations of pupils' behaviour. Rewards and sanctions are being implemented more consistently by staff. As a result, pupils behave well around the school and in most lessons. Incidents of boisterous behaviour have reduced because you have restructured lunchtimes and 'zoned' the playground. You have also deployed play leaders to provide structured activities during lunchtimes.

Teachers have a better understanding of the progress that pupils need to make in their class. They are more aware of how to support those pupils who speak English as an additional language to make faster progress in their learning but teachers recognise that there is still more work they need to do. You know that while

improvements have been made in some areas, these improvements are not evident in every class, particularly in the teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics). You have rightly identified reading as an area for improvement and are working with teachers to develop their skills and to raise the profile of reading within the school by enhancing reading areas in classrooms and changing how reading lessons are organised. You are aware that although teachers are getting better at using reading sessions to develop pupils' wider reading skills, more needs to be done to demonstrate that pupils are reading widely and are exposed to the rich diversity of good quality children's fiction and non-fiction books.

You are also aware that improvements are required in writing. For example, too little attention is paid to teaching pupils how to use grammar and other cohesive techniques effectively in their writing. Instead, teachers focus too much on other features such as writing in a particular style. Some pupils' books show that, in a short space of time, they are required to write in two or three different ways and are not given enough time to show that they can write well in any one style such as story or diary writing. Books also show that some pupils' grammatical errors are not identified and so errors persist from one piece of work to another. Displays around the school do not help pupils understand how the English language is structured.

Members of the governing body are taking suitable action to improve the way in which they hold the school to account. They have completed an external review of their effectiveness and have reorganised their structure to focus more on school improvement. Governors are becoming more familiar with pupil progress information and have a greater understanding of the impact of spending on the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. They have put in place more effective reporting procedures in order to ensure that they are kept well informed about the quality of teaching. A scrutiny of minutes of governing body minutes show that governors are asking the right questions of the school's leadership team particularly when checking on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Agreed school systems for safeguarding have greater rigour and key records are maintained appropriately.

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

Since September, the school's local authority adviser has visited twice and provided you with helpful support and guidance. Links with local schools and other commercial providers of training are developing well and helping you to tackle the school's priorities for improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Wolverhampton and as below.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy