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Mrs Cameron
The Headteacher
Ravensbourne School
Neave Crescent
Faringdon Avenue
Romford
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RM3 8HN

Dear Mrs Cameron

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ravensbourne School

Following my visit to your school on 16 December, 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 up targets and milestones so that they are measurable and where appropriate based on pupil progress and the quality of teaching
- report to governors an evaluation of pupil progress each term for each key stage, and for different groups, in English and mathematics; compare rates of pupil progress against national figures so that governors are able to hold leaders fully to account for their work
- set challenging targets for teaching assistants linked to the progress pupils make through the appraisal cycle
- make it explicit who is responsible for the good or better teaching and good or better progress in the staffing structure, as well as in the action plan.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, a group of teachers, teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors. I also met with the Chair of the Governing Body, and a senior representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's action plan. I made visits to all classrooms and considered pupils' learning since the start of the Autumn Term. I looked at several monitoring documents. I considered the report written following the external review of governance.

Context

There have been some changes in staffing since the school was inspected. These include a new deputy headteacher, who was previously the head of early years, and a new head of the sixth form. There is currently a vacancy for the head of early years.

Main findings

You, senior leaders and governors are determined to make sure that the school is judged to be good at its next full inspection. You have willingly taken on board advice and support from the local authority, external advisers, and from a variety of schools. You are using this support well to raise staff's expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Your action plan includes the priorities identified as requiring improvement at the time of the previous inspection. You have made sure that the governing body has undergone an external review. The action plan to address the areas of weakness at the time of the last inspection identifies time scales for implementation, monitoring, evaluating and when the actions are embedded. The action plan does not have measurable targets with key milestones so that success can be measured precisely, based on good achievement and good teaching.

You have re-structured the senior leadership team so that there is a better focus on improving the quality of teaching and achievement. You have introduced several improvement strategies, including planning more precisely to meet the complex and differing needs and abilities of pupils. I checked how this was being implemented through discussions with staff and observations in classrooms. There is clearly a common sense of purpose, and consistency of approach. Most staff have willingly implemented the intense training they have received to improve all aspects of pupils' communication skills. They plan and assess small steps in pupils' learning which informs pupils' next steps more precisely.

You explained to me that members of staff have revised the groupings of pupils, and you believed that this was having a positive impact on achievement and behaviour. This is particularly so for autistic pupils who are now taught by the same member of staff in small groups, for longer periods of time. Staff corroborated your judgement, saying the changes

were having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning, and helping them to concentrate and learn more successfully. This was confirmed by my observations.

You have made sure that members of staff have received up to date training. You have targeted good support for those teachers who require improvement, through coaching and mentoring. You and your deputy are determined to make sure that all members of staff are held fully to account for the quality and impact of their work on pupils' achievement and personal development. However, you have not made it explicit who has responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and raising pupil achievement in each key stage, including in the action plan. Furthermore, teaching assistants are not held fully to account for their work because they are not set challenging targets to improve their skills based on the progress pupils make.

The recommended external review of governance has taken place. The Governing Body has taken on board all of the recommendations identified. The Chair of the Governing Body told me that the half termly Progress Review meetings, led by the senior local authority representative, gives governors a clear mandate to make sure the quality of teaching and achievement improve.

You showed me that the school is data rich but you do not present this information in a coherent and clear way. This means that leaders, including governors do not have a good enough overview of how different groups of pupils, in different key stages are performing. This information is not cross referenced with national figures, and therefore leaders do not have oversight of the school's performance in relation to other schools nationally.

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 the school's full section 5 inspection, the senior local authority adviser meets with leaders and governors half termly to check the progress made towards the areas for improvement. The school works with a number of schools, one of which is a teaching school identified by the local authority. Leaders have used this support to tailor their actions in specific areas: they track the progress of those students with profound learning difficulties, and for those students with autism more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Her Majesty's Inspector