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Mrs Nicola Gatenby / Mrs Helen Scarth
Headteacher
Newhall Park Primary School
Newhall Road
Bierley
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD4 6AF

Dear Mrs Gatenby / Mrs Scarth

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Newhall Park Primary School, Bradford

Following my visit to your school on 15 January 2015, 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:

- make clear the rationale for the use of pupil premium funding
- check more rigorously on how well this funding is helping pupils to make progress
- sharpen the evaluation of the impact of this funding.

The local authority must take action to increase the governing body's capacity to check and challenge leaders by appointing members with the knowledge and skills to do this.

Evidence

During the inspection meetings were held with you, the assistant headteacher, middle leaders, the Chair of Governors and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plan. We visited lessons and talked to pupils. We looked at pupils' work to see how effectively writing is taught and how well teachers use assessment information, marking and written feedback to help pupils improve their work.

Context

Since the inspection the leadership team has been restructured. Two new middle leaders have been appointed and, to drive forward the improvements needed, some internal appointments have been made to increase the capacity of the leadership team.

Main findings

The school's improvement plan indicates leaders are very clear about what needs to be done and what impact their actions should have. The plan is comprehensive. It leaves no stone unturned in seeking to address the areas for improvement and leaders have taken prompt action to address these. Already, there are indications that these actions are having a positive impact on standards. For example, a review of the school's handwriting and marking policies has ensured all staff are clear about what is expected. This has resulted in greater consistency in the application of these policies across school. This is motivating pupils to have a more pride in their work, as well as helping them to improve the different aspects of their writing.

The systems and procedures implemented by leaders prior to inspection to improve writing have made an impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Most teaching is carefully sequenced to help pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need to write with confidence and increasing accuracy. Pupils have more opportunities to write at length both in English and in other subjects. The English leader constantly reviews developments in teaching with staff and seeks to improve the curriculum. Boys are well motivated and engaged in learning because the texts they are exposed to are interesting and challenge their thinking. Although the approach to the teaching of writing engages boys well, it does not always challenge the most able. Leaders are aware of this through their own evaluations.

Since the inspection, subject and phase leaders, as well as the special needs co-ordinator have become key drivers of school improvement. They have introduced and developed systems and procedures to lead and manage their subjects and areas more effectively. Staff say there is better communication at all levels and increased support to improve teaching. This is leading to a common understanding of what leaders expect and a determination to improve. Senior leaders give these middle leaders the time they need to undertake their work and hold them to account

robustly. Weekly meetings are a time for honest discussion and evaluation. Leaders focus on the next steps to improve teaching, provision and standards. This is increasing the pace and sustaining the strong momentum of improvement.

Leaders have made effective use of external partnerships. As a result, there is sufficient capacity within the school to support and challenge each other. Middle leaders are clear about where the strengths in teaching can be found and make use of this to support others. For example, one teacher's expertise is being used to improve reading throughout school.

A recent review of the school's use of pupil premium highlighted some key actions for leaders to address which they have taken on board quickly. Past decisions, including some funding commitments, have prevented them from using all of the funding in the way they see fit. Despite this, leaders are using the remaining funding to tackle the identified barriers to achievement, but they do not articulate well enough their rationale for this spending. Neither, have they checked and evaluated the impact of this funding rigorously enough.

A review of governance is underway and should be completed by the end of January. The local authority, headteachers and chair of governors agree that, in its present form, the governing body does not have the capacity to lead and manage the school effectively. The local authority needs to take urgent action to secure this aspect of school 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

The local authority is providing 'light touch' support because it is confident the school is on its way to becoming good sooner than later. Nevertheless, it recognises that the effectiveness of governance is a stumbling block to this. The school improvement adviser makes regular checks on the school's progress and has supported the development of leadership within the school.

Middle leaders have sharpened their focus on improving the curriculum and teaching through their work with external consultants and local school partnerships. This is helping them to drive forward the improvements needed at a pace.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer
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
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- For free schools, UTCs and studio schools [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school is a non-maintained special school [hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk]