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16 January 2015

Ms R Baker
Headteacher
Tanners Brook Primary School
Elmes Drive
Millbrook
Southampton
SO15 4PF

Dear Ms Baker

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Tanners Brook Primary School

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 confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, a governor and a representative from the local authority. I also visited classrooms with you, scrutinised work in books, reviewed documentation and had a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in September two teachers have left.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You have taken purposeful action to tackle the weaknesses identified in the recent inspection report. Your calm and measured response to the judgement of serious weaknesses, and the positive way in which you have led your staff, have resulted in a 'can-do' attitude across the school. The improvement plan is effective; it is clear about what you will do and when. However, it does not include milestones to show how much progress pupils should make, so governors and leaders cannot check over time if the actions are improving the school.

The leadership team is becoming more effective as a result of useful training and development. Leaders are taking sensible action to improve teaching in their areas of responsibility. They are beginning to understand that they need to review the effectiveness of their actions by checking how much more pupils are learning.

Teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics is improving. You have sensibly introduced a detailed termly plan which is helping teachers to plan effective sequences of lessons. Teachers have also started to organise pupils into ability groups. Some of the work we saw in books was more age appropriate and there was evidence of many pupils working at the correct level for their ability.

It is good to see that pupils now have more regular opportunities for extended writing. We were able to see some good quality pieces of work in the new writing books. The lessons on persuasive writing in the three Year 6 classes resulted in pupils producing some interesting letters with exciting language choices, such as 'traumatised'.

You have sensibly reviewed the way that phonics (how letters link to sounds) is being taught. Teaching groups are now organised by ability and teachers are assessing more accurately. Although there is more to do, pupils are more frequently being taught at the right level.

All the changes above demonstrate that you are taking appropriate action to improve teaching. However, because you have not checked carefully whether pupils are making more progress, you do not know with certainty that these actions are bringing improvements in learning over time.

Governors want the best for the pupils but they are not as effective as they need to be. They are not clear enough about their roles of supporting and challenging, nor how to perform these efficiently. In their determination to help the school to improve, there are occasions when they undertake responsibilities of school leaders. This is causing unhelpful tension between the governing body and leadership team. The governor review, which was stated as a necessary action following the recent inspection, has not been undertaken. It is essential that this is carried out urgently.

The local authority is now providing useful support for leaders through advisors and the local teaching school, Portswood Primary School. The statement of action details the further provision being made available for leaders and governors; it would be helpful to show specifically how teaching will be supported.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Southampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams

Her Majesty's Inspector