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27 January 2015

Mr Dave Smith
Headteacher
Stradbroke Primary School
Richmond Road
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S13 8LT

Dear Mr Smith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stradbroke Primary School, Sheffield

Following my visit to your school on 26 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 October 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:

- ensure that the Governing Body secures the full-time leadership of the school by appointing a substantive headteacher to provide greater stability and enable the school to quickly become good.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, two members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A brief tour was made of classrooms.

Context

The one term contract for the executive headteacher has been extended for a further term. The executive headteacher is headteacher of Woodthorpe Primary School, a neighbouring school within the City Community Learning Trust. Despite advertising three times, the Governing Body has not found a suitable candidate for the headteacher vacancy. A teacher left and has been replaced by a long-term supply teacher. An assistant headteacher has been released from class teaching to lead improvements in the quality of teaching.

Main findings

Staff and governors were initially disappointed by the inspection outcome. On reflection, leaders recognised the accuracy of the identified areas for improvement. The improvement plan provides a well-structured set of actions with clear success criteria and termly milestones for the current school year.

The key obstacle to securing long term improvement is the continuation of part-time temporary headship of the school. The school has been led by executive headteachers on a part-time basis for two years. The Governing Body and the local authority recognise that the leadership of the school needs a full-time substantive headteacher. They are meeting shortly to identify new strategies to make sure the school is successful in recruiting a headteacher.

The executive headteacher, acting head of school and assistant headteachers have worked together effectively to plan and begin implementing improvements. Increased time for the assistant headteacher to support and challenge individuals has helped leaders to focus more promptly and accurately on the needs of individual teachers. Increased opportunities for teachers to work with other teachers in this and other schools are contributing to early signs of improvement.

Some weakness in teaching is due to lack of experience and insufficient guidance. Each member of staff now has a bespoke action plan linked to the school improvement plan and to their individual professional development needs. This has helped teachers to become more accountable for improving their teaching. Leaders have also given teachers more responsibility for explaining their pupils' progress and reviewing the impact of actions taken.

Teachers have been issued with guidance on the quality teaching, the work in pupils' books and the learning environment. These tools are beginning to improve the consistency of teaching and learning. Classrooms and rooms for small group work have been tidied up, and wall displays improved, to communicate a sharper focus on pupils' learning.

Leaders recognised inconsistencies in the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics). As result, the school has moved from whole class to small group teaching which

makes better use of teaching assistants. Teaching assistants have received additional training. Leaders in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage have been given more responsibility for ensuring the quality of phonics teaching. Senior leaders are checking the organisation and quality of phonics teaching more closely and report improved achievement in the current Year 1.

A pupil premium review has been carried out. This helped leaders to identify the extra support that has most and least impact and to reallocate resources. As a result of the review leaders decided appropriately to prioritise extra support for reading and writing, especially for disadvantaged pupils.

Governors are focused on making the improvements identified in the inspection report. They welcome the improvements to the learning environment, the re-organisation of phonics teaching and the tighter procedures for managing teachers' performance and pupil progress. The more specific and measurable targets in the school improvement plan are enabling governors to check more accurately what has been achieved and what still needs to be done. Governors have set up a pupil premium working party to more closely oversee the use of this funding and its impact.

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 acknowledges that the school has suffered from unstable leadership for too long. It is working closely with the Governing Body to appoint a headteacher. Since the recent inspection, the local authority has carried out a review and decided to increase the monitoring and support for the school. An independent school improvement partner helped leaders to sharpen the improvement plan. A local authority consultant has provided helpful support for English. The school is working appropriately with other schools to develop aspects of teaching and assessment.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell

Her Majesty's Inspector