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2 February 2015

Rani Singh
Stanwick Primary School
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Dear Mrs Singh

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stanwick Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 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:

- Improve further the quality of teaching so that support for those students who are underachieving is included in teachers' planning as a matter of routine.
- Ensure a more consistent use of the marking policy so that pupils are clear on what teachers' feedback means, pupils are regularly given time to respond to written feedback and that they do so effectively.
- Ensure the provision for the most-able pupils enables them to progress at a faster rate across all key stages.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, members of the senior leadership team responsible for mathematics, reading and writing, the inclusion manager, and the Chair of the Governing Body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. I accompanied you on a brief tour of the school during which we visited all classes and I had brief conversations with a few pupils. I looked at a wide range of documentation including progress data, the school's schedule for monitoring the quality of teaching, plans for training and continuing professional development, reports on the external monitoring carried out by the local authority, samples of planning documents and some exercise books.

Context

There have been some staff changes since the last inspection. Several new staff took up post at the start of this term. You have drawn upon existing experience in the school and considered carefully the optimum arrangements for your pupils, given some difficulties in recruiting. The deputy headteacher has moved from Year 5 and now teaches Year 6. He shares the class with the inclusion manager, who teaches the class for 2 days a week. A regular supply teacher has replaced the deputy head as teacher of Year 5 for 3 days a week. A new teacher for Year 4 took up her post in January. A supply teacher who is a newly qualified teacher is working alongside the teacher of Year 1.

You have put together a more structured induction programme in order to integrate new members of staff as promptly and successfully as possible. This includes appropriate support and training opportunities for newly qualified teachers. There are clearer procedures and expectations for mentoring new staff. Mentoring is carried out by members of your senior leadership team and other good practitioners in the school.

Main findings

You have created three groups within your senior leadership team entitled Well-Being, Humanities and Communications. Each group is led by a member of the senior team according to their individual experience and areas of responsibility. All teachers, higher level teaching assistants and teaching assistants belong to one of the groups. The members of each group are involved in discussing key areas of focus, agreeing priorities for their day-to-day responsibilities and long-term planning. This reflects your promotion the ethos of the school, which includes high expectations of collective responsibility for making the progress that is needed in addressing the areas for improvement.

In addition, you have restructured your senior leadership team so that each member has clear responsibilities directly relevant to the areas for improvement. Senior

leaders are responding well to this approach and they have rapidly developed their leadership skills. Monitoring is purposeful. The senior leaders review teachers' planning on a weekly basis and address any shortfalls, especially in terms of meeting the needs of different groups.

The senior leadership team and the inclusion manager have written action plans which address specifically the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. For example, provision for the most-able, and for the teaching of mathematics. These action plans are incorporated into the school improvement plan.

Your school improvement plan includes milestones for the end of each full term that are expressed as measurable outcomes, for example, as targets for pupil progress. Some actions need to be more explicit, for example, by making reference to groups of pupils. In places, the plan lacks clear success criteria. More specific detail and quantifiable, interim measures of success, would feed more accurately into the regular and effective monitoring that is taking place. Cross-references between the improvement plan and the monitoring schedule and the evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning would help further with this.

You have put in place a well-documented system to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. This uses information from formal lesson observations, learning walks, analysis of data and work scrutiny. Teachers are given written feedback on areas of strength and areas to improve. You are visiting lessons more often on learning walks and give verbal feedback to teachers afterwards. Teachers are much more used to 'drop-ins' made by the senior team. You also carry out joint observations with members of your senior team to moderate their judgements.

Early indications suggest that the rate of pupil progress is accelerating. For example, Year 4 were underachieving at the end of 2013-14 but are now on track for meeting their targets. You have introduced a new system for tracking the progress of the pupils. All teachers are using this. Information from this system is discussed at pupil progress meetings. The meetings are held every half-term and are attended by the class teacher, two members of the senior leadership team and the inclusion manager. Pupils who are underachieving are identified and appropriate support is put in place for them.

Two schemes have become established in the school to develop skills in extended writing. They have led to progress in the quality and frequency of extended writing across all subjects.

The marking policy was drawn up following consultation with all staff and staff training. The senior leaders' focus now is to implement the plans and ensure greater consistency of practice across all key stages.

A range of strategies is in place to increase levels of challenge and the progress of most-able pupils. Increasing numbers of pupils have targets of level 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. They are being supported through enrichment activities and intervention. The provision for the most-able in year groups other than Year 6 needs to be boosted at a faster rate. The inclusion manager and her team of higher-level teaching assistants and teaching assistants provide valuable support for the most-able and any pupils identified as underachieving. Teachers are not routinely including sufficient challenge for the most-able in their lesson planning.

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

You receive a good level of support from the local authority. You are visited at least termly by the local authority representative. You received advice and guidance from her on the school's improvement plan so that the responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation are clear. The local authority has brokered a range of links with other schools. For example, working with a local school with similar priorities, on curriculum development. Your involvement in 'learning hubs' and networking training with other primary heads has provided you with valuable leadership development. The deputy headteacher works with a consultant in mathematics to address areas for improvement such as 'Planning for Challenge'.

You have forged your own links with other schools and organisations and these provide opportunities for you and your staff to share good practice. There are clear systems in place for cascading information and training to all staff. The programme of training and continuing professional development reflect the priorities for the school.

The governing body is able to provide you with increasing levels of support, advice and challenge, based on their professional experience and training. Governors are linked to different subject areas and there is a more structured approach to their visits to the school and their role in monitoring. In particular, the Chair of Governors meets regularly with the deputy headteacher to review the impact of the action plan for mathematics. Governors are rightly aware of the need to sustain their current levels of expertise.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser
Her Majesty's Inspector

