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Ms F Kitchen
Acting Headteacher
Bowsland Green Primary School
Ellicks Close
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Dear Ms Kitchen

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bowsland Green Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Wednesday 4 February 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 and the first monitoring visit.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the local authority are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the section 5 inspection and the first monitoring visit. The school should take further action to:

- speed up learning in those classes where teachers do not expect enough effort from their pupils
- share the high quality teaching skills and levels of professionalism seen in one of the mixed Year 3 and 4 classes, the Year 5 class and in the Year 6 class with those teachers who are developing their expertise
- make better use of the shared working spaces outside the classes in Years 1 to 6 so that pupils can extend their learning opportunities in a range of different contexts.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher and two governors. Informal discussions were held with staff and pupils. Visits were made to all classes except a mixed Year 3 and 4 class who, in the absence of a regular supply teacher, were being temporarily being taught by two higher level teaching assistants.

Context

Since my visit on 10 June 2014 there have been a number of staff changes. The substantive headteacher did not return to school after the summer holidays and retired at the end of October. An executive headteacher supported the school three days a week from mid-September until the end of October. At the beginning of November an experienced headteacher was seconded from another school in the local authority until the end of this academic year. Three teachers joined the school at the start of the academic year. The school is currently employing a number of long-term temporary teachers covering for staff who have recently resigned or are on sick leave. Shortly after the arrival of the acting headteacher, the class structure for Years 5 and 6 was changed. There is now a Year 5 class, a Year 6 class and one mixed class of Years 5 and 6. Additional governors have been recruited to support the governance of the school. Governors are currently in the process of recruitment for a new headteacher for September 2015.

Main findings

At the time of the first monitoring visit school leaders were asked to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By remodelling two small classrooms into one large Reception area, teaching staff have created a space which is now fit for purpose. Following the purchase of equipment more suitable for this age range, children are now motivated in their learning and provided with more appropriate challenge. Teaching staff plan activities which strongly support the development of reading, writing, number and personal skills. Cosy book corners, exciting areas for writing and the use of real money in everyday activities are ensuring that the children are absorbed in their learning. The outdoor area has been transformed and opportunities to work in the 'mud kitchen' and 'mud pit' are firm favourites with the children, developing not only their communication, reading and writing skills but extending their physical development. Leaders are fully aware that the outdoor area still needs further development. Exciting plans to extend the area to provide even more challenging opportunities are currently being considered.

During the previous visit it was also noted that the presentation of pupils' work, including their handwriting skills, required improvement. The handwriting policy now provides clear guidance to both teachers and pupils. Your insistence on teachers accepting nothing but the best quality work, is ensuring that the presentation of

pupils' work is steadily improving. However, not all teachers expect enough effort from their pupils and this slows down the speed of learning in some lessons. An increase in the use of a 'special license' which gives pupils permission to write in ink has been well-received by older pupils and has improved the quality of their presentation. Following the reorganisation of Years 5 and 6, teachers now plan and take responsibility for their own classes and have a greater knowledge of individual pupil achievement. Older pupils report that they find the work more challenging now and pupil progress is steadily improving.

Together with the substantive deputy headteacher, you have quickly established a strong senior leadership team who are respected and valued by staff. Subject leaders have been appointed and they are now held to account for the progress that pupils make. You and your deputy headteacher have energised staff to engage with the changes and this has improved the capacity for school development. Morale amongst the staff is high and they demonstrate a willingness to improve their skills and raise pupil achievement.

The external review of the governing body which took place in late June 2014 highlighted that in the past they had depended too heavily on the headteacher for information about the school. Little evidence was found of the ways in which the governors checked on the performance of the headteacher and examples of challenging questions were not found in the minutes of their meetings. Since the review there has been an impressive change in the way in which governors support the school and ask challenging questions of the senior leaders. Governors have identified the aspects of the school's work they are best suited to and have linked with individual teachers to find out more about specific subject areas. Governors are delighted with the appointment of a new clerk to the governors which is enabling them to make sure that minutes of meetings are accurately recorded.

Staff, pupils and governors comment on the 'transformation' of the school. Classrooms, corridors and the shared learning spaces have been tidied up and refurbished. Pupils' work is celebrated and interesting artefacts such as models of teeth and human skeletons make learning meaningful. However, the classrooms for Years 1 to 6 remain cramped and not enough use is made of the shared areas to support learning.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspections.

External support

Since my first visit the local authority has acted swiftly and decisively to support school improvement. By arranging for your secondment as a highly experienced headteacher, they have secured inspirational leadership which is being used to guide and motivate staff. The support provided by the Early Years adviser from the local

authority has been instrumental in securing the positive changes which have been made for the Reception children. Regular checks made by an external consultant commissioned by the local authority are ensuring that the momentum of school improvement is maintained. Local outstanding schools are providing high quality coaching and training for teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector