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Mrs Lin Whyte
Acting Headteacher
Girton Glebe Primary School
Cambridge Road
Girton
Cambridge
CB3 0PN

Dear Mrs Whyte

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Girton Glebe Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 March 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. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- share good practice between teachers to improve the engagement and attitude of pupils such that they take greater responsibility for advancing their own learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and two representatives of the local authority. A meeting was held with the special educational needs coordinator and the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage. I also met with two parents. Your action plan and Early Years Foundation Stage action plan were evaluated.

Accompanied by you, I visited a range of lessons where we looked at pupils' work and at examples of teachers' marking. I also spoke to pupils about their learning. With the assistant headteacher I looked at assessment information relating to pupils' attainment and progress.

Context

You took up the position of acting headteacher for three days a week in January to cover the maternity leave of the substantive headteacher. On the remaining two days, the role of acting headteacher is covered by the two assistant headteachers. There have been no other significant changes in staffing since the inspection.

Main findings

The current leadership team have an enthusiastic and unwavering determination to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. This positive attitude is supporting staff to engage in improvement. Many of the actions taken are already starting to bring about positive changes.

You, as a senior leadership team, have developed an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This information has been used to set a clear direction for improvement and staff are whole heartedly supportive of this. As a result, improvements can be seen in the quality of teaching and in the standards of pupils' work. Half-termly recording of the assessment of pupils' progress and teachers' use of this information to plan lessons means that pupils' learning needs are better met. As a result, they are making more rapid progress. In Year 6, pupils are making accelerated progress. However, this recent improvement is not making up for historically poor teaching and, therefore, the proportion of pupils making at least expected progress currently remains below the national level.

The school's action plan details timely and appropriate actions. Staff responsible for the actions and how and when these will be monitored to ensure success are identified. However, the plan does not have a strong enough focus regarding the improvements to be made in pupils' behaviour or the expected developments in their attitudes to learning. Leaders have already identified this is an important priority and there is good practice in some classes. For example, in the Year 1 and 2 class, pupils were taking positive ownership of their learning in mathematics. Each group of students was managing the task set at a level appropriate to their knowledge at the start of the lesson. They were able to complete the task and move on when, as a team, they were ready. As a result pupils remained on task throughout the lesson and their attitudes remained positive.

Through pupil progress meetings, held between leaders and teachers, teachers are being supported to set more challenging long term targets for pupils' attainment. Teachers now know they are responsible for pupils achieving these. These targets are rightly based on pupils' individual starting points. However, the ones established for pupils with special educational needs are not specific enough.

The tracking of assessment information is now used to produce detailed analyses which are shared with staff and governors. This has enabled governors to offer more specific challenge to leaders about the progress made by groups of students. It is also used to identify where progress needs to improve. It is too early to judge if this new tracking system is having a strong impact on improving pupils' progress.

Year 2 assessment information shows that these pupils are not making as much progress as in other years. Leaders have requested external moderation of these assessments to ensure they are accurate and plans are in place to provide extra support for pupils. Because staff have increased knowledge and confidence in teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) pupils are making rapid progress in reading and assessment information shows that more are on track to reach the expected standard this year than in previous years.

Changes to the learning environment are appreciated by parents and pupils. The vibrant display at the entrance to the school demonstrates to pupils that they are expected to respect the school and that their work and achievements are highly valued. Throughout the school, good quality displays show pupils' work at its best.

The governing body have taken on the challenge of moving the school forward with great determination and are rapidly developing their skills through a range of training. They have sought opportunities to be better informed about how the school is developing. For example, through attending pupil progress meetings so that they can check information first hand. Governors are beginning to use the outcomes from teachers' performance reviews to support decisions regarding pay increases.

External support

The local authority supported the governors putting the current leadership arrangements in place which is proving to be effective. Advisers have taken timely and appropriate action to increase the level and range of support provided to the school. This includes well focused development of the early years environment.

Advisers are also providing bespoke support for individual teachers as well as whole staff training in improving the quality of teaching. Staff have engaged positively with the challenge they are offered through observations of their work and as a result are improving their practice effectively.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Mary Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector