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9 March 2015

Kathryn Sugars
Foley Park Primary School and Nursery
Northumberland Avenue
Kidderminster
DY11 7AW

Dear Mrs Sugars

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Foley Park Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 9 March, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2013. 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 a leadership structure is in place that will sustain the rapid improvement achieved since the previous monitoring visit

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A range of documents was examined, including records of checks made on the quality of teaching, and information about pupils' behaviour. Short visits were made to lessons and pupils' books were scrutinised.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, the deputy headteacher and three other teachers have left the school. Two teachers have joined and the senior leadership team has been temporarily restructured. A National Leader in Education (NLE) is providing leadership support. A member of her staff works in your school one day each week to support the temporary leadership team and to provide training and coaching for teachers.

Main findings

You have shown drive and resilience in responding to the findings of the previous monitoring visit. You considered carefully the shortcomings in monitoring that were noted and have sharpened procedures considerably. Your expectations for what does (and does not) constitute effective adherence to agreed policies and practices have increased and your checks on the quality of teaching are more rigorous. The quality of teaching has improved as a result and pupils are making better progress. Pupils report that lessons are often now more interesting. One explained this by saying, 'Instead of just reading about what we are learning, we now actually do it.' This was seen around the school in the busy buzz of activity in many classes and the enthusiasm for learning shown by pupils in lessons.

Prior to the departure of the deputy headteacher, you and she had established improved systems for tracking pupils' achievement. These have led to much greater clarity about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and have enabled governors to hold you to account more effectively. You have built impressively upon this process by using a wide range of information, in addition to data about pupils' attainment and progress, to inform judgements about the quality of teaching. This includes evidence from pupils' books; visits to lessons; analysis of records relating to pupils' behaviour and the views of pupils themselves. You effectively draw together this breadth of evidence to form a detailed and accurate picture of teaching quality in each class. You use this information to provide support and additional challenge where it is needed.

You have been judicious in your use of external support, seeking and accessing only what you believe to be right to meet the needs of your school. The support you have chosen from other schools is, therefore, well focused. While some of this support is still very new, already there is evidence that it is making a difference to pupils' learning.

Since the deputy headteacher has left the school, you have distributed the responsibility for checking the quality of teaching more widely. The two 'phase leaders' (teachers responsible for early years/ Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 respectively), have quickly become established in these roles and are making an effective contribution to the increased pace of improvement. For example, one phase leader has identified there exists an imbalance in Key Stage 1 between the time

given to teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and giving pupils opportunities to use these skills to write sentences. She has set out a clear plan to address this issue. The other phase leader demonstrates a detailed understanding of the progress made by different groups of pupils in Years 3 to 6. She provides both challenge and support to teachers if any pupils are falling behind.

Governance is now much more effective. Governors report positively on the impact of the review of governance carried out by the local authority. They have recently re-visited the process for themselves to evaluate the effectiveness of their own work. Governors now focus sharply on school improvement. Individual members of the governing body, and the pupil progress group, are actively involved in monitoring pupils' achievement. Governors use data about pupils' progress, alongside the helpful information you provide to them, very well to challenge the performance of individual teachers. Governors set a clear expectation that action will be taken, if necessary, to secure good teaching for all pupils in the school.

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 knows the school well and recognises the notable improvement made since the previous monitoring visit. For example, the school improvement adviser has signposted your exemplary system for monitoring the quality of teaching to other headteachers seeking to improve their own school's effectiveness. The support provided by the NLE and her staff has been welcomed by your teachers and new leaders and is beginning to lead to better teaching.

I am copying this letter to the co-Chairs of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector