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19 March 2015

Mrs Alex Owens
Headteacher
Spring Lane Primary School
Spring Lane
Northampton
NN1 2JW

Dear Mrs Owens

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Spring Lane Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 18 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 second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. This inspection collected information about the role of the Collaborative Academies Trust as part of a coordinated inspection of schools. The results of this will be reported to the Secretary of state and published on the Ofsted website.

Senior leaders, governors and the sponsor are continuing to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior and subject leaders. A meeting was also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chief Executive Officer of Collaborative Academies Trust (CAT), to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I observed two lessons with you. I scrutinised pupils' books and examined other academy documentation. I checked the single central record.

Context

Since the last inspection, the special educational needs leader has left and a new special educational needs leader has been appointed from within the existing staff. Six class teachers have also left. A new Key Stage 2 manager has been appointed. Four new teachers have been appointed, one of whom is temporary until the end of the summer term.

Main findings

You continue to exhibit a strong determination to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching at Spring Lane. Your actions are carefully planned and targeted appropriately to maximise your effectiveness in ensuring pupils are closing gaps in their learning. You expect a great deal from your staff and they are rising to the challenge.

You have improved the quality of teaching by ensuring teachers plan more closely to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers know what their pupils are able to do and they change their teaching as they identify their pupils' needs in lessons. The quality and quantity of pupils' writing has improved considerably since my last visit. You have successfully raised teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Pupils are demonstrating a newfound confidence to develop their own ideas and write them down. As a result, progress in writing has accelerated significantly across all year groups. However, pupils' learning in mathematics is not as well developed and progress in this subject is less consistent across the school.

You are successfully building a team of senior and subject leaders who share your determination and commitment to improve outcomes for pupils. Leaders at all levels regularly check the quality of teaching and challenge their colleagues to do better. Bespoke training and support mean they are quickly developing the skills they need to support you in your work. As a result, leadership at all levels is becoming increasingly effective in accelerating progress and closing the attainment gaps for pupils.

The governing body is better organised and is becoming increasingly effective in its role. New systems for checking the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils mean it is much better informed about the effectiveness of school leaders' actions. Governors regularly visit the academy to look at pupils' work, meet with senior leaders, and check the progress of development plans. As a result, governors are asking appropriate and increasingly challenging questions of senior leaders in order to fulfil their role.

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 Collaborative Academies Trust (CAT) is providing effective support to the governing body so that it can develop systems for checking the quality of the academy's work. As a result, governors are becoming increasingly active in finding out for themselves about the effectiveness of school leaders. CAT has also provided an external consultant to challenge and support the headteacher in checking the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher reports this has been very effective in helping her evaluate her actions and reshape her improvement plans. CAT provide further challenge through the 'Team Around the School' meetings that hold leaders and governors to account for their effectiveness in meeting improvement targets.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire, the Chief Executive Officer of Collaborative Academies Trust and the Department for Education Academy Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Jan Connor
Her Majesty's Inspector