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24 April 2015

Mrs Amanda Bartholomew
Headteacher
Anston Park Junior School
Park Avenue
North Anston
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Bartholomew

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Anston Park Junior School, Rotherham

Following my visit to your school on 23 April 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. Thank you for allowing my colleague, Susan Hayter HMI, to accompany me.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2015. 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:

- apply performance management processes rigorously to ensure all teaching is at least good and that leadership responsibilities are carried out effectively
- ensure leaders have the necessary skills for their role and distribute leadership responsibilities more widely
- formalise a key strategic group of leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority, to systematically check the progress the school is making towards becoming a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, subject leaders for literacy and numeracy, two teachers, the acting Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with a group of pupils. You accompanied me on a tour of some classrooms where we sampled some pupils' books and observed pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. I evaluated the school improvement plan and scrutinised other documents relating to the work of governors, checks made on the quality of teaching and information on pupils' progress.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing or to the membership of the governing body since the last inspection. You have taken on responsibility for the leadership of literacy. Some minor changes have been made to the grouping of pupils for the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

Main findings

You have put in place a detailed plan that sets out the actions you will take to improve the school. The plan has an appropriate timescale and includes milestones across the next 18 months when you will evaluate the school's progress. The plan is providing clear guidance for all members of staff and for governors.

You have taken a no-nonsense approach to improving the quality of teaching. You have worked collaboratively with members of staff to review and re-launch policies for teaching and learning and for marking. You are managing the performance of teachers and leaders more rigorously than in the past. In addition, you have issued a set of non-negotiables so that all members of staff are clear about what they must do and what is expected of them. Furthermore, you have introduced a more rigorous timetable of checks on the quality of teaching and learning, to determine whether members of staff are meeting your expectations. These checks show that some teachers are responding positively to the feedback they receive, but others do not consistently meet expectations. For some classes, this is having an adverse impact on learning and slowing down their progress.

You have introduced a new marking policy. Initial checks on pupils' books show most teachers have begun to develop their practice. However, some feedback given to pupils does not provide enough direction on how to improve their work. Whilst pupils make corrections to calculations or spellings, they are not challenged to think more deeply and develop their work further.

Standards in writing continue to be lower than those in reading and mathematics. In order to address this, you have taken on the leadership of literacy yourself, and have begun to identify more opportunities for pupils to write at length in other subjects. A new workbook has been introduced in which pupils keep all their written work from a wide range of subjects. As a result, pupils are taking more pride in the

presentation of their work. A new approach has very recently been introduced for the teaching of spelling, although it is too early to tell if this is having a positive impact.

Since the last inspection, the school has continued to implement its preferred approach to assessment. You recognise that assessment practice in the school has been underdeveloped in the past and that further work is required to secure an accurate picture of what pupils know, understand and can do. Teachers told me they feel they need further training to help them make accurate assessments. This is an increasingly pressing issue, because some work provided for pupils still does not match their needs and does not challenge the most able.

You have established a partnership with a good school and with an external consultant to help with developing leadership skills. At present, the skills of leaders in the school remains variable. As a result, the burden of responsibility for checking on the quality of teaching rests with you and the deputy headteacher. You and members of your governing body recognise there is a need for leadership responsibilities to be distributed more widely, so that all aspects of the school's work can be developed effectively.

The external review of governance has begun but will not be completed until June. In the absence of strong governance at the moment, you, the acting Chair of Governors, the local authority and the headteacher of your support school have established a steering group that will review the school's progress. This group has only met once so far and its function needs to be improved so that it becomes an effective vehicle for checking whether the school is on course to become a good school.

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

External support

In the past, the local authority provided light touch support to the school. Following your appointment as headteacher the local authority increased its level of support and has helped you to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school. A local authority representative has brokered the support of a school in Sheffield and this partnership has begun to provide useful help.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector