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15 May 2015

Mrs Rebecca Bridges
Headteacher
Bedford Drive Primary School
Bedford Drive
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Merseyside
CH42 6RT

Dear Mrs Bridges

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bedford Drive Primary School, Wirral

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 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 January 2015. 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:

- increase pupils' attendance
- raise boys' attainment in writing
- develop the curriculum so that it has greater coverage and focus on democracy, the rule of law, respect for all protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act, and individual rights and liberty
- increase the impact middle leaders have on pupils' achievement in the subjects they lead.

Evidence

During the inspection I held a meeting with a small group of pupils, with a representative of the local authority and two members of the governing body. I also held discussions with you and the deputy headteacher and then with members of the senior leadership team. I had a brief tour of the school to observe the school's work.

Context

There has been considerable upheaval in staff in the last year. Two more teachers left the school after the inspection and another is on long-term sickness absence. A senior leader took up post after Easter and is leading on developments in the curriculum.

Main findings

The points for improvement identified in the inspection report regarding leadership are no longer relevant. The school's targets for improvement are ambitious and measurable. Leaders frequently check the impact of the actions they have taken to improve teaching by observing lessons, looking through pupils' work, analysing assessment data and speaking with pupils.

Staff have been trained in the development of writing and in the use of, and the terminology of English grammar. As a result there is now a consistent approach and all staff use the same accurate terminology. There are more chances for pupils to write in other subjects such as history, science and geography. The staff have reduced the use of pre-populated worksheets which sometimes hinder pupils' opportunities to write. Instead, they have changed to providing activities that encourage pupils to write in greater length. This approach is working for most groups of pupils but there is still a way to go to increase the quality of boys' writing.

Pupils' attendance is still too low which is hindering their achievement. Some initiatives have started to work to reduce the number of pupils who are away for too long but more needs to be done to make sure they are in class and benefitting from lessons. Pupils that I spoke with said lessons had improved and are now interesting from the start through to the end of the lesson. They also said that behaviour in and out of school has improved.

Leaders have made a good start to improving and developing the curriculum ready for September. As part of the review, for example, staff considered the aims and purpose of the new history curriculum before customising the national requirements to suit the pupils at Bedford Drive. Leaders should now take time to consider the best ways of incorporating fundamental British values into the curriculum that is, democracy, the rule of law, respect for all protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act, and individual rights and liberty.

Leaders at all levels are having an impact on raising pupils' achievement. In Nursery and Reception for example, the leader has developed teachers' abilities to devise activities for the children based on assessments of what the children need to learn next. As a result children are making quicker progress. The leader of Years 1 and 2 has worked effectively with teachers and the impact has been improved teaching and progress for pupils. Some teachers who lead subjects have not yet had the same impact, often because they are very new to the school, and therefore this is the next aspect to be improved.

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

The local authority has been highly supportive of the school after the disappointment of the unexpected Ofsted inspection judgement. It has worked successfully to quickly rebuild staff confidence and morale. A representative of the local authority led the governor training day. As a result, governors have a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of assessment data. They are now comparing the performance of pupils more earnestly against the national average for pupils rather than by just comparing with other pupils in the school. The level of detail recorded in the minutes of meetings has improved and now includes evidence of governors' challenge and support.

The local authority services have also been effective. Advice and guidance from personnel have helped to successfully manage staff illness and turbulence. Support and training for newly qualified teachers has helped to enable these new teachers to have a positive start to their careers.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector