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23 June 2015

Stuart King
Cheswardine Primary School
Glebe Close
Cheswardine
Market Drayton
TF9 2RU

Dear Mr King

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cheswardine Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 June 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 March 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:

- finalise the approach that will be taken for assessment without levels from September 2015
- ensure that the school's guidelines for marking and feedback are applied more consistently
- ensure that the advice that leaders give teachers on how to improve their practice is more precise.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the leader of literacy, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was

evaluated. You joined me on brief visits to classrooms where we spoke with pupils and looked at examples of their work.

Context

Since the inspection in March 2015, a chair of governors has been elected and a vice-chair is to be elected imminently. One teacher has returned from maternity leave. During the monitoring inspection two classes were being taught by supply teachers, one due to sickness and the other to cover a teacher who was meeting with representatives of the local authority to review pupil assessment information.

Main findings

You have responded well to the issues identified for improvement by the inspection in March 2015. Along with the local authority and the national leader of education (NLE) who is providing support to the school, you have developed a focused action plan concentrating on what most needs to improve. Actions within the plan are specific and it is clear what the intended impact of the actions taken should have on improving the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils.

As a result of training provided by the NLE and her staff, teaching assistants are now being deployed more effectively in classes. This means that pupils are more engaged in their learning and consequently starting to make better progress. Pupils' workbooks contain helpful comments made by teaching assistants when they have supported a pupil which lets the teacher know how well the pupil has understood their work and any further support that may be needed. Teachers use this information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning more accurately.

Along with other leaders in the school you are making regular checks on the quality of teaching by visiting classrooms and looking at pupils' work. The feedback given to teachers is now more focused on how well groups of pupils are progressing in lessons and this helps teachers to know what they are doing that is effective. When providing teachers with areas for further development the comments recorded are not specific enough to make it really clear what needs to improve. As a result, it is not easy to measure how effective the feedback has been on bringing about the desired improvements.

The school's policy for marking pupils' work has been reviewed and consistent expectations of how pupils will receive feedback are being developed. Where marking is at its most effective, pupils receive well focused comments on what they have done well and how they could improve further. Pupils respond to this feedback and improvements are evident in their books. Teachers now point out spelling, punctuation and grammar errors more routinely. However, marking is not yet consistent across the school and in some books the comments made by teachers are too general to guide the pupils effectively. In other instances pupils have not responded to the good advice given by teachers.

The school has continued to develop the systems for analysing information about the progress that pupils make. There is a greater focus in this analysis on different groups of pupils including the most able and disabled pupils and those who with special educational needs. Teachers are starting to use this information to plan work that meets the needs of these groups of pupils more precisely. A wider range of progress information is being collected, including reading ages and other standardised tests. The school has not yet decided on its approach to assessment once National Curriculum levels are no longer in use from September 2015. It is strongly advised that the school resolves this swiftly so that there are secure systems and approaches in place to track the progress that pupils are making from the start of the new school year.

Workshops have been held to encourage and support parents in helping their children to read at home. A project for a specifically identified group of pupils and their parents has been trialled this term and this stimulated greater involvement by parents. Initial evaluations of the programme indicate that it has been successful in improving reading for these pupils. The recently revised systems for assessing pupils' progress in phonics (the sounds that letters make) is helping teachers to provide the specific support that pupils need. As a result, the school's assessment information indicates that the proportion of Year 1 pupils that will achieve the required standard in the national screening is likely to rise this year to be in line with the national average.

Governors express a tangible determination to see the school improve. They have reviewed their meeting structure and clerking arrangements. Governors are starting to make regular visits to the school to monitor the implementation and impact of the action plan. As a result, governors now focus more effectively on the evidence of impact on pupil progress when evaluating strategic plans and challenge leaders to bring about further improvements. Governors are keen to establish productive links with other local schools in order to further strengthen Cheswardine's capacity to improve.

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 is providing a suitable balance of support and challenge to the school. The support provided by the NLE has been welcomed by staff and governors and has had a positive impact in supporting the establishment of effective leadership practices. The support provided to teaching assistants is already having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and progress of pupils. Regular review meetings, led by the local authority, enable its officers to keep a careful check on the school's ability to plan for improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services Shropshire.

Yours sincerely

Mitchell Moore
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority