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24 June 2015

Mr Alan Reeves
Headteacher
Florence Melly Community Primary School
Bushey Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L4 9UA

Dear Mr Reeves

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Florence Melly Community Primary School, Liverpool

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 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:

- further share good practice so that improvements in the quality of teaching (including feedback and marking) are consistent across the school
- review the 'getting to good' plan so that senior leaders and governors can effectively use it to check the impact of actions on improving the quality of teaching and raising the achievement of pupils
- ensure that improvements in the early years provision are sustained and built upon consistently across the Nursery and Reception years.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and headteacher designate, English, mathematics and early years leaders, two representatives of the local authority, five members of the governing body and a group of pupil learning ambassadors to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Documents were scrutinised including: the school's 'getting to good' action plan; records of recent checks on teaching and minutes of the recent 'challenge board' meeting with the local authority. I also toured the school to observe children undertaking activities linked to your healthy school week.

Context

There have been a number of significant changes since the last inspection. The headteacher designate, who will take up the role of substantive headteacher in September (following your retirement), joined the school team at the start of June to work alongside you and other senior leaders. A new early years leader, special educational needs co-ordinator, mathematics subject leader, geography subject leader and design and technology subject leader have also been appointed. You have also employed a 'cover teacher' to give subject leaders time each week to undertake their role.

Main findings

Despite disappointment at the latest inspection judgement you, governors and senior leaders have drawn a line in the sand and with the recently appointed headteacher designate are determined to set the school on course to becoming good. You have carefully considered the findings of the latest inspection and formulated a 'getting to good' development plan. All members of staff have had the opportunity to contribute and as a result there are a large number of actions that are scheduled for the forthcoming months. These actions clearly address the identified areas required for improvement. However, some areas of the plan are not useful in helping you or governors check on your progress. This is because some of the criteria to measure success lack clarity or do not fully relate to what impact there will be on the quality of teaching or the achievement of pupils.

Governors of the school have taken decisive action to ensure that there is a smooth transition of leadership between you and the headteacher designate before your retirement at the end of this academic year. Mr Heaton, the headteacher designate, took up his post at the start of June and in that short time you have both established an effective working partnership. The headteacher designate has utilised his time well and has undertaken a cycle of lesson observations with subject leaders and a learning walk with the Chair of Governors. As a result, he has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has held a number of staff meetings, alongside you to share findings and communicate raised expectations.

You have taken positive action to improve the early years provision. The appointment of a new early years leader is paying dividends. She shares your ambition for the children in her department and is determined to bring about rapid and sustained improvements in the Nursery and Reception years. She is leading by example and is working closely with teachers to model lessons and raise expectations.

Significant funding has been spent since the inspection on improving the early years learning environment. New furniture and resources have been purchased that have resulted in a more purposeful indoor environment that enthuses children in their learning. However, as you are aware evidence gathered following a recent learning walk shows that further action is required to ensure that some spaces are further defined, particularly to ensure sufficient challenge for the most able children. You have earmarked further funding to develop access to the outdoor learning environment and this work will be undertaken during the summer.

The headteacher designate has established links with two local outstanding schools, allowing early years staff the opportunity to visit and observe teaching and the learning environment. As a result, teachers have started to change their planning and further adapt the learning provision. Nonetheless, you and the early years leader are aware that improvements are at an early stage and need to be sustained with further actions.

Subject leaders are beginning to establish themselves in their new roles and are keen to contribute to school improvement. The English leader has an accurate view of his subject and is beginning to introduce consistency and rigour to improving the quality of teaching. Using his own good practice as an example, he has shared with teachers, a number of non-negotiable expectations for the quality of pupils' workbooks and the classroom environment. These are at the early stages of being embedded. A recent learning walk undertaken by the headteacher designate and subject leader confirm that further improvements and consistency are needed across the school. Other recent changes that are at the early stages of development include the introduction of a new three weekly teaching sequence with an increased emphasis on spelling, punctuation and grammar and the introduction of a new planning guidance document to underpin the progression of pupils' writing skills.

You appointed the mathematics subject leader in April and she has used her short time in the role to establish a thorough understanding of the task ahead. She has acted quickly to revise the mathematics policy and has used her own classroom environment, during a recent staff meeting, to demonstrate to staff the effective features of a working wall. You have ensured that she has had the training and support required to undertake her role and she has welcomed the bespoke training from the local authority mathematics advisor to formulate her vision for the subject and plan training for staff.

Her recent lesson observations with the headteacher designate have helped her to identify areas for further development. Training has been booked in September to develop the teaching of using and applying mathematical skills to problem solving. A number of other actions have also been initiated but are in the early stages of development and therefore you have not been able to evaluate fully their impact. These include; the delivery of mathematics lessons by a specialist teacher for the most able pupils, after school mathematics intervention lessons for pupils in years 1, 3 and 5 and links established with an outstanding school to support improvements in the teaching of mathematics across the school.

Some teachers are leading the way and are setting the standard in improving the quality of feedback and marking. Learning ambassadors say that when they have the opportunity to respond to marking, as seen in Year 5 during my scrutiny of a small number of books, they have a greater understanding of what they need to do to improve and are 'pushed further' in their learning. However, your own evidence points to inconsistencies across the school and that there is further work to be done to ensure that all feedback is of the same high standard.

Pupils are proud of their recent appointment as 'learning ambassadors'. They speak eloquently and with passion about how the best learning in school is fun and that they are now able to make choices about the direction that their learning takes in some classes. They were also able to clearly explain how their practical activities such as Capoeira (a Brazilian art form linked to dance and martial arts) that they took part in during their day of sport and other healthy school activities were inspiring them to learn and write.

In the words of the Chair of the Governing Body 'we are using the inspection judgement as the building blocks and foundation for school improvement'. Governors have taken purposeful actions for example, through insisting on the early appointment of the headteacher designate and supporting you in appointing a new early years leader to ensure that the capacity to bring about urgent improvements is robust.

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 provided appropriate support and challenge. Links have been established with a number of outstanding schools and a local authority mathematics advisor is working closely with the subject leader. A recent challenge board was held to hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Bell

Her Majesty's Inspector