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8 July 2015

Miss Julie Wragg
Headteacher
Stirling Primary School
Prospect Place
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN1 3QP

Dear Miss Wragg

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stirling Primary School, Doncaster

Following my visit to your school on 7 July 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:

- improve provision in the early years through more effective use of outdoor resources
- add achievement targets for 2016 into the school's plans for improvement, and ensure governors systematically check whether different groups of pupils are on course to reach these targets
- ensure new teachers receive training in strategies to develop pupils' language and communication skills, specially for those pupils for whom English is an additional language
- revisit the school's non-negotiables for teaching and learning, so that all members of staff (including those new to the school next term) are clear about what is expected of them.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, three teachers, the vice-chair and one other member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Both deputy headteachers accompanied me on a tour of the school during which I sampled some books and observed pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. I evaluated the school's plans for improvement and scrutinised the single central record, minutes of governing body meetings, assessment information and records of local authority visits to the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection two teachers have left the school. A third teacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, has begun a maternity leave. In September, four new teachers will join the school, which will enable the creation of an additional class into upper Key Stage 2.

The school is currently consulting on extending the school day from the beginning of September 2015.

Main findings

Following some turbulence in staffing and the rapid increase in pupil numbers across 2013-14, the outcome of the school's last inspection in March was not a surprise to you. Since the inspection, you have drawn up new plans that set out in detail the actions you will take to improve the school. However, your plans do not include targets for pupils' attainment and progress in 2016. These should be added, so that those responsible for evaluating the school's progress can gauge whether the actions you are taking are ensuring pupils are on track to reach good levels of attainment at the end of each key stage.

The school's assessments indicate standards at the end of the Reception Year are expected to be higher this summer, with around half of children on course to attain a good level of development. This is partly because staffing in the early years has been more stable. In addition, teachers are assessing childrens' skills and knowledge more rigorously and working more closely with local pre-school providers, which has helped them to better understand each child's next steps. As a result, teaching is becoming more tailored to each child's particular needs. Resources in the outdoor area remain limited however. There are few resources to stimulate children's curiosity with numbers or letters and little is available to encourage the development of early writing skills. More needs to be done to improve outdoor provision, especially as the current outdoor space is scheduled to undergo building development and may not be available for a significant part of next year. In September

you plan to work with external providers to explore how outdoor spaces might be used more effectively to support learning in the early years.

The school's most recent assessments at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 indicate pupils' attainment is likely to remain well below the 2014 national averages for reading, writing and mathematics. Levels of attainment continue to be affected by the high number of pupils that join the school during the year. Those pupils that have attended the school for longer are on course to attain standards closer to the 2014 national averages. Across Key Stage 2, pupils are on track to make similar progress to that seen nationally in writing and mathematics, with better progress being seen in reading.

You are building more effective systems to help teachers improve their practice. This is particularly important, as you have a high proportion of inexperienced teachers in the school. You have provided training to establish your preferred approach to assessment and to improve the teaching of mathematics. In addition, you have begun to train teachers in strategies to improve pupils' language and communication skills. Further training in this area will be required from September onwards, as teachers new to the school will rapidly need these skills to meet the needs of pupils with English as an additional language. From September, you have plans in place to introduce a more formal coaching programme, so that less experienced teachers will have the opportunity to work alongside more experienced colleagues.

Work to improve the effectiveness of marking is on-going. Checks you have made since the last inspection show marking is improving, but is still inconsistent, as not all teachers are reaching expectations. You have challenged where this has been the case. However, you recognise that the non-negotiables for teaching you put in place at the start of the year need to be revisited, particularly as you have a number of new teachers joining the school in September.

Senior and middle leaders are contributing more effectively to staff training and to checks on the quality of teaching. Both deputy headteachers now make formal and informal lesson observations and provide teachers with written and verbal feedback. This has helped some teachers to refine their practice and improve their teaching. Both deputy headteachers will have more leadership time to continue this work next term. However, leadership capacity remains stretched, as efforts to recruit a new leader to coordinate the school's pastoral provision have been unsuccessful and the special educational needs coordinator has begun a maternity leave. Until appointments can be made, you plan to manage these responsibilities yourself.

The disruptive behaviour of a small number of pupils is improving, as they are responding positively to the additional support they are receiving.

The governing body has effective systems in place to check on the delivery of the school development plan. Governors visit the school often and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors review pupil

progress data regularly, but need to be more systematic in checking whether different groups of pupils are on track to reach attainment and progress targets.

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 an increased level of support since the last inspection. In particular, good support has been provided for the early years team which is contributing to a rise in standards by the end of the Reception Year. In addition, good in-class support is being provided by bilingual classroom assistants to support pupils for whom English is an additional language. More widely, the local authority has established a multi-agency team to coordinate efforts to better meet the needs of the local community.

The local authority has also brokered further support to the school from September onwards through a local teaching school alliance.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector