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Ms Sarah Bolt
Headteacher
Newfield Primary School
Longstone Avenue
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Dear Ms Bolt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Newfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 November 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 May 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other leaders, members of the governing body including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority, in order to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school development plan, visited lessons to observe learning and spoke to pupils and staff informally around the school. A range of documents were scrutinised, including information on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, school policies and procedures, and records of meetings.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection, the school has experienced a number of strategic staffing changes. Both the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher left at the end of the summer term. An interim deputy headteacher has been appointed. The local authority has allocated a consultant headteacher to work with the school in order to support leadership capacity.

Main findings

You restructured the senior leadership team at the start of the academic year. It is now better placed to implement the systems and changes you have planned. You told me about the remaining difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. The staffing structure of the school now includes three phase leaders and two middle leaders. You are currently reviewing this structure with governors. A number of full-time positions are yet to be filled.

Since the last section 5 inspection, you have identified the areas for improvement and formed a post-Ofsted action plan. You and your leadership team have made an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The action plan addresses key priorities. However, the actions do not concisely convey your expectations to develop pupils' mathematics and writing skills.

The Key Stage 2 results in 2015 were disappointing. In particular, a low proportion of pupils achieved the required standards in English and mathematics. Consequently, you have recognised the urgency to raise pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. This has resulted in a focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

You and your senior leaders recognise that inconsistencies remain in the teaching of writing and numeracy in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The observations that we shared during my visit reflect these inconsistencies. We noted a variation in the application of whole-school policies to support the progress that pupils make in their writing.

During visits to lessons, you and your leaders identified a lack of stretch for the most-able pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2. We saw written work that did not sufficiently extend pupils' writing skills. An exception to this was in the early years classes. In these classes, children were exploring the areas of learning and developing mark-making and letter forming through the application of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make). In all key stages, pupils are provided with many opportunities to share their speaking and listening skills. However, pupils are not always provided with guidance to deepen their understanding and develop mastery in mathematics.

Pupils' behaviour seen in classrooms was positive. They worked well with their peers to share answers. Pupils were particularly attentive in an assembly to introduce the values of the school. They shared their enthusiasm in working towards a 'reward band' for demonstrating any of the seven school values. Pupils are willing to accept instruction and eager to learn.

Together we scrutinised pupils' work in books to identify the inconsistencies in their learning. You also said there is still variation in the quality of teaching and the application of assessment. You understand this has contributed to disappointing learning outcomes. However, your expectations of staff remain high. You are realistic with regard to the challenge ahead to raise standards and new systems have been introduced.

You have developed the capacity of middle leadership in the school. There are now middle leaders with responsibility for the coordination of literacy and numeracy. Middle leaders are responsible for developing their own plans for improvement. Unfortunately, these plans do not include clear evaluation of the impact of actions undertaken on the learning of pupils. However, middle leaders now have a greater role in whole-school development.

Your senior and middle leaders undertake regular 'book walks' to monitor the progress in learning shown by pupils in their books. Findings from a range of activities undertaken by leaders to check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment show that inconsistency remains in the progress made by pupils. Leaders recognise that pupils require more challenge if all pupils are to progress well, particularly those pupils who are disadvantaged.

Senior leaders have challenged teachers to hold them to account. However, this challenge needs to be sharper if the rapid improvements you desire are to be achieved. Teachers now monitor more closely the progress made by pupils. Consequently, their actions are beginning to have an impact on the progress pupils make. However, the achievement of pupils is not strong enough.

You are confident that the actions you and your leaders have taken will raise outcomes. However, you are not complacent. You have set a realistic but challenging target to continue your drive for improvement. Consequently, you have developed systems to review the performance of all teachers in order to evaluate their impact on the progress pupils make. This should provide a focus for the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the school. Leaders and governors rightly recognise that changes are not fully embedded across the school.

The governing body has strengthened its challenge to the school. The Chair of the Governing Body has a firm understanding of the areas of development that the school must address. The statutory duties of the governing body, including that of safeguarding, are well fulfilled. The Chair of the Governing Body has a clear vision to involve all governors in monitoring and challenging leaders. Consequently, the

governors now work through a committee structure. Governors have been allocated clear lines of responsibility. Governors confirm they are now asking tougher questions of the school. Records of meetings support this assertion. Governors correctly identify the difficulties the school currently faces, particularly the challenge of recruitment.

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 expertise to assist leadership capacity. A consultant headteacher has been allocated to work with the school. She has reviewed the areas for development and evaluated the staffing structure. The local authority continues to provide support to the school. It evaluates the impact of its actions through the 'rapid improvement group'. The local authority understands the need to continue to support teacher and governor recruitment, monitor the progress of the school, and challenge further. The external support of the local authority has been well received by school leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lambern
Her Majesty's Inspector