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15 December 2015

Mr Craig Robertson
Headteacher
Albany Junior School
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Dear Mr Robertson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Albany Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 7 December 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 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 visit, meetings were held with you and your senior leadership team, two subject leaders, four representatives of the governing body, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your plans for improvement. I considered documentation relating to the monitoring of teaching and reviewed your most recent information on pupils' progress and attainment. We conducted a tour of the school together and visited all classes to see pupils and staff at work.

Context

Since the recent inspection, a new mathematics subject leader and Chair of the Governing Body have been appointed.

Main findings

Your improvement plans focus sharply on improving pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics. The challenging targets you have set are giving a clear message to staff of the increased expectations for all pupils to make at least good progress.

You, and other senior leaders, are checking on the quality of teaching more frequently. You are regularly scrutinising teachers' planning, looking at work in pupils' books, visiting lessons and considering information relating to pupils' achievements. This is helping you to provide teachers with detailed feedback on how to improve their practice, as well as appropriate training and support. Teachers are in no doubt about their responsibilities to address any identified development points and to provide a portfolio of evidence to show how they are meeting their targets.

The consistent implementation of 'Rainbow Grammar' is improving pupils' technical aspects of writing, such as grammar, punctuation and spelling. As a result, pupils told me that they are gaining confidence to write at length and for different audiences. They were keen to share recent examples of writing, including persuasive letters, comic strip stories and rap poetry. Pupils are enthusiastic about the weekly 'Big Maths, Beat That' challenges. These are successfully improving pupils' mental mathematics skills. For example, your most recent monitoring indicates that 80% of pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are confident in using their multiplication tables. You are working successfully with parents to help them understand the ways in which they can support their children's learning at home. For example, through the effective use of partnership books and parent workshops. Teachers are checking more closely on the progress of pupils during lessons and, where necessary, providing additional support or challenge. As a result of these changes, pupils are becoming more engaged in their learning and making better progress.

You are effectively developing the roles of the English and mathematics subject leaders. You have robust procedures in place to ensure that they effectively monitor their subject areas and the progress that pupils are making. They are becoming more confident in tracking the progress of groups of pupils and this is helping to give them a clearer understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in their respective subjects. As a result, their plans for improvement are detailed and are having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning.

Governors have high expectations of the school. They appreciate the new colour coded format that you have devised for presenting them with information about pupils' progress. This is helping them to become more focused on the progress of different groups of pupils and to challenge you with increasing confidence.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority rightly recognises the capacity of senior leaders to drive school improvements. Consequently, it is providing 'light-touch' support. You appreciate the regular contact of the school improvement officer to check on progress and challenge you on the impact of your leadership.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector