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16 February 2016

Mr Chris O'Connor
Headteacher
Hurst Drive Primary School
Hurst Drive
Waltham Cross
Hertfordshire
EN8 8DH

Dear Mr O'Connor

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hurst Drive Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 2016, 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 June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in June 2015, 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 inspections in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to improve the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also undertook a tour of the school with you and the assistant headteacher with special responsibility for teaching and learning to review the quality of pupils' writing and talk to them about their work. The school improvement plan was evaluated and the latest monitoring reports compiled by local authority improvement officers were reviewed.

Context

Several teachers left at the end of the last academic year to be replaced by new teachers for this year. An assistant headteacher was also appointed with specific oversight for teaching and learning, together with a new leader for the early years. There is currently one vacancy for a parent governor.

Main findings

You have been quick to tackle the key issues identified at the last inspection. In partnership with other senior leaders you have instilled a culture of continuous improvement and higher expectation. Roles and responsibilities for middle leaders are clearly defined. Consequently, these teachers make a good contribution towards your drive for improvement. You have worked closely with staff and governors to design and implement an effective plan for improvement. This plan identifies clear timescales for action and tight criteria to measure its impact against pupils' achievement.

The quality of teaching continues to improve but a review of your monitoring records and discussions with you confirm these improvements need further consolidation before teaching becomes consistently good. However, scrutiny of pupils' books and discussions with them about their work indicate that the teaching of writing continues to improve. Pupils in all year groups have good opportunities to write for sustained periods in lessons. All teachers provide good-quality feedback through detailed marking and review of pupils' work. Discussions with pupils confirm that they value this high-quality feedback because it helps them to improve their writing quickly. However, a legacy of previously weak teaching has led to inconsistencies in pupils' handwriting and presentation. You are, therefore, right to recognise that this is a further area for improvement.

Your appointment of a new leader for the early years is recognised by local authority staff as a positive step in rectifying the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. She has quickly reorganised the teaching areas and implemented joint planning to ensure greater consistency in the quality of learning experiences for the children in these classes. Baseline assessments are thorough and accurate.

You and the governing body quickly followed through the recommendations of the external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding. As a result, there is greater engagement of senior staff and governors in monitoring the use of this extra government funding to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. A review of your latest assessment information confirms that these pupils are making better progress than similar pupils nationally.

Monitoring by the governing body, such as that through presentations by middle leaders about the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, provides governors with a clearer picture of what the school is doing well and what needs further improvement. The governors make effective use of assessment information and

visits to the school to ask challenging questions of both yourself and senior staff regarding the progress that different groups of pupils make. Governors possess a wide range of skills and expertise. They share your vision for the school and are keen to provide all the support they can.

External support

You have made good use of teaching and learning advisers from the local authority to develop the skills and expertise of middle leaders. Improvement officers provide specific guidance and support through regular monitoring of the school's progress. Reports are used well to identify further areas for action and training.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector