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Mr Mick Hayes
Headteacher
Grove House Primary School
Myers Lane
Bradford
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Dear Mr Hayes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Grove House Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 October 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 January 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in January 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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

The school should take further action to:

- make sure that improvement plans have clear timescales for when actions will happen and show how the actions are intended to improve pupils' progress
- improve the checks made on teaching, in order to tackle identified weaknesses successfully and improve the quality and consistency of teaching across the school, to enable pupils to make better progress
- urgently improve the quality and rigour of external support provided to the school, including the support provided by the local authority.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your deputy headteacher and five curriculum leaders. I also met with three governors, the local authority achievement officer and had a telephone conversation with the head of primary school improvement in the local authority. I undertook two learning walks, one with you and the other with your deputy headteacher, and sampled pupils' work. I also met with a group of key stage 2 pupils. I evaluated a range of documentation, including your school improvement plans, monitoring of teaching, minutes from governing body meetings and notes of visit from both local authority officers and the external school improvement consultant brokered by the school.

Context

Since the inspection, a teacher of Reception and a Year 3 teacher have left the school. One Year 1 teacher and two Year 6 teachers are currently on maternity leave. New staff include a recently qualified teacher in Reception, two newly qualified teachers and two supply teachers.

Main findings

You and other staff I spoke with felt shocked and surprised that the school requires improvement for a second time. Most, but not all, staff and governors have accepted the inspection findings. Some have found it harder to accept as external support had provided an inaccurate and over-optimistic view of how well the school was doing.

You and other leaders have not responded quickly enough to the weaknesses highlighted in the recent inspection. Your checks on teaching are weak and lack rigour. You and other leaders do not consider how well pupils are progressing over time. Consequently, you and other leaders believe that teaching is much stronger than it actually is. This is slowing the pace of improvement and the rate at which pupils make progress.

Current plans for improvement are confusing and muddled. Despite previous inspection reports over the years highlighting the weaknesses of improvement planning, you and other leaders have not made sure that plans are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors agree that plans are unclear as to how they will specifically go about improving pupils' outcomes. Timescales are often vague and imprecise and this is making it difficult for governors to hold you and other leaders to account.

Your subject leaders have a long way to go before they develop the skills to consistently and thoroughly check and begin improving teaching. They have a strong desire to improve the school but currently some lack the skills to do this. Pupils confirm that teaching is still too variable. The most able pupils spoke of how they easily 'zoomed through' work that regularly lacked challenge. During our

learning walks, we saw many examples of teachers not challenging pupils well enough across a range of different subjects. For some pupils, the work was far too easy, while for others it was too difficult.

Governors are not sharply focusing on the impact that you and other leaders are having. This is in part due to the range of confusing plans currently in place. It is not helped by governors' lack of confidence or ability to ask challenging questions about the quality of teaching and the progress being made by pupils.

You have had impact in improving some aspects of the school since the inspection. Pupils are attending more regularly and the number of pupils persistently absent is reducing. Pupils were also positive about aspects of the themed curriculum and said that it was more enjoyable.

External support

The local authority support is woeful and ineffective. Local authority officers have avoided difficult conversations with the school. Officers have not shared with leaders the concerns they have about the quality of teaching and weaknesses in the improvement plans. The checks the local authority has made on the progress the school is making are superficial and lack any genuine rigour or challenge. Local authority officers have been too willing to allow the school to find its own support without checking whether it is having the desired effect.

Other external support brokered by the school has not been good enough. Basic weaknesses in how leaders go about checking on the quality of teaching have not been tackled. As a result, weaknesses that leaders do spot in lessons, including the need to challenge the most able pupils, are repeatedly identified but not improved. Ineffective plans have gone unchallenged. Consequently, weak external support has contributed to leaders having an over-inflated view of how well the school is doing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector