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13 December 2012

Mrs Alison Cornell
Headteacher
Durrington Middle School
Salvington Road
Worthing
BN13 2JD

Dear Mrs Cornell

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Durrington Middle School

Following my visit to your school on 10–12 December 2012, 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. A monitoring inspection of Durrington First School was carried out during the same period.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, members of staff, and a representative of the local authority. The main action plan and those for English and mathematics were scrutinised. Senior leaders' reports, from observations of lessons, were reviewed, and notes of visits completed by advisers from the local authority.

Context

Since the inspection, one teacher and three learning support assistants have been appointed.

Main findings

Governors and leaders have introduced some appropriate changes to improve the quality of teaching and strengthen leadership. Several teachers have taken on responsibilities to lead teams and are positive about the part they are to play in the school's improvement. They have already met with teachers to agree the features that need to be included in teachers' plans to improve teaching.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have observed a good number of lessons since the inspection but their written reports are too general to improve teaching to good. They are not sufficiently diagnostic about pupils' learning and do not give teachers enough guidance on what they can work on to improve.

The school's action plan covers the main elements that the school needs to improve but is too long and has far too many actions. It is not specific enough about the weaknesses and barriers that are prevent teaching and achievement from becoming good. Timescales and arrangements for checking that actions have been successful are unclear. These shortcomings make it difficult for governors to ask the right questions of senior leaders, to assure themselves that the school is improving in the right way and at the right pace.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- improve the action plan to focus more precisely on the specific aspects of teaching and achievement that need improving and include clear, measurable targets so that those evaluating its impact can judge the success of actions
- make sure that senior leaders evaluate the quality of pupils' learning, first and foremost, including the learning of different groups, when observing lessons.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has received several visits from a number of advisers since the inspection, either from other schools, the local authority or external consultants. The analysis of data, carried out in November by the local authority, has been helpful in identifying some year groups where pupils' progress needs to accelerate. The support that senior leaders have received in relation to the main action plan and developing expertise in observing lessons has not been successful.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector