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Mr K Armitage
Headteacher
Joseph Locke Primary School
Shaw Street
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South Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Armitage

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Joseph Locke Primary School, Barnsley

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 2013, 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 February. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, faculty leaders, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated as well as very thorough evidence presented by the deputy headteacher to show the impact of the actions taken. A tour of the school was conducted.

Context

There have been no changes in context since the section 5 inspection

Main Findings

The action plan identifies the appropriate areas for development with clear milestones and success criteria linked to pupil progress. Areas for improvement are being tackled with enthusiasm at all levels.

Improvements in the monitoring of teaching and learning include ten minute visits to lessons, learning walks and termly formal lesson observations. These are rigorously evaluated against the areas for improvement and teachers are given individual feedback and development plans which tell them how they must improve. These plans now need to be linked to the training needs of the teachers.

Modelling and team teaching are used to share good practice. Teachers are starting to work in pairs to evaluate their own teaching (through video recording) and reflect on the observations they make when they visit an outstanding school later this term. Evidence shows better use of interesting and brisk starts to lessons, planning which is at the right level for the pupils, good questioning and pupils being encouraged to think, generate ideas and become confident learners. In the lessons where teaching and learning is not yet good these improvements still need to be developed. The amount of teaching and learning which is currently good or better is similar to that seen in February. In order to become a good school more teaching needs to be good or better.

A new marking and feedback policy helps pupils to know what they have done well and how to improve their work. This needs to be used consistently so that all pupils have time to respond to their targets.

Systems for checking pupils' progress are more rigorous, especially of different groups and individual pupils and this ensures that extra help is targeted at those who need it most. The pupils who are getting extra help are monitored closely when school leaders visit lessons and when data is looked at. This is now done on a regular basis. Teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their class at termly meetings with senior leaders. With the support of the deputy Headteacher, faculty leaders are developing their analysis of pupil progress data and report to senior leaders and governors each term.

Monitoring suggests that the three year decline in Key Stage 1 attainment will be reversed this year and that there will be a significant increase in the numbers of pupils who achieve the expected standard in phonics. Although attainment will decrease at Key Stage 2, progress will remain good.

Leadership and management will be strengthened in September by the secondment of an assistant headteacher from an outstanding school and the reduction of the teaching load of the deputy headteacher. Governors are challenging and holding the school to account rigorously through the work of a school improvement strategy group and governing body meetings. They recognise the impact made in addressing the areas for improvement.

Senior leaders, governors and the local authority are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- make sure that almost all teaching and learning is good or better by linking the individual development plans for teachers with specific training
- give pupils time to respond to the targets set when teachers mark their work
- develop faculty leaders' independence in the use of progress data
- drive improvements even more rapidly when leadership and management are strengthened

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 is providing very strong support for the school through regular visits and the work of the school improvement strategy group which has been a key driver in the improvement of the school. (The school improvement strategy group is made up of senior leaders, governors and the school improvement officer). The local authority has brokered links with outstanding schools to provide support for teaching and learning and the secondment of the assistant Headteacher. They are offering training in leadership for the deputy headteacher and faculty leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

Her Majesty's Inspector