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18 June 2013

Mr A Ponsford
Headteacher
Grove Primary School
Hazel Grove
Trowbridge
BA14 0JG

Dear Mr Ponsford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Grove Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the school's leaders for literacy and numeracy, the Chair of the Governing Body, a staff governor, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement action plans were evaluated. The outcomes of the school's and the local authority's monitoring activities were taken into account as was the external review of the governing body carried out by a national leader for school governance. The quality of writing across Key Stage 2 was evaluated through a range of activities, including scrutinising a selection of class folders of pupils' work and by talking with a group of eight Key Stage 2 pupils about their work.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection, the deputy headteacher has been on long-term sick leave. Three members of staff, two in Key Stage 2, are leaving at the end of the summer term. Replacement staff have been appointed for September 2013, including a new leader for numeracy. There is a new Chair of the Governing Body and most the governing body are new to their role.

Main findings

Since February 2013, the school has benefited from good quality training and advice delivered by the local authority through the Wiltshire Improving School Programme (WISP). Staff have trialled new learning success criteria, and involved pupils in self-evaluation and peer-evaluation. Pupils told me that they really enjoy these new approaches and that they are help them to learn. School data show that in general pupils' progress either improved in term 5 or has been sustained from term 1 and is now more often good. The school is aware that although this is a positive step forward much more needs to be done to improve consistency of teaching and learning throughout the school to the very best. There are examples of outstanding teaching and learning in the school. We agreed that to raise teachers' aspirations still further they need to witness more outstanding teaching.

Since the last inspection the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators have received good quality training and support from the local authority specialists and the local authority lead advisor for the school. They have undertaken lesson observations, scrutinised pupils' work, and analysed performance data. As a result, they have correctly identified where inconsistencies in practice remain and, importantly, put forward strategies to show how these can be resolved. With your support and encouragement they have begun to hold colleagues to account for the work in their area of responsibility. Satisfactory progress has been made in redefining the roles and responsibilities for each member of staff. We agreed that this needs to be concluded by the end of this term and that that leaders and managers will have termly targets, which are set directly against the school action plan. We also agreed that the new procedures that have been trialled and found to be successful at improving learning should be implemented across the school this term, rather than waiting until September. These include the way pupils' books are set out and the ways that teachers mark them.

From September 2013, the deputy headteacher will not be working full-time as a class teacher so that he can take focus on his senior leadership role. In order to help develop this role we agreed that he would get good quality external training, coaching and support from the local authority.

The new Chair of the Governing Body has reflected on his training, and coaching. He has taken the core national competencies into account to create new structures for meetings and to establish efficient monitoring and moderation systems that can be

used by all the governing body. The intention is to help the governing body improve rapidly. The governing body is in the process of organising sub-groups that will take responsibility for holding the school's leaders to account for their area of work. The governing body is also in the process of receiving training and support for their new roles. We agreed that they need to have a better level of understanding of data, by the end of this term, so as to be able to challenge the school more effectively.

External support

The school is now producing accurate data about pupil performance each term. The school has been well supported by the local authority WISP partner and the literacy and numeracy consultants to develop this level of expertise. As a result, the school's leaders are using this data to identify relevant strengths and areas for future development.

As you know, the WISP partner has also conducted a case conference with both you and the Chair of the Governing Body. During the meeting each year group's performance was considered in detail and the school firmly held to account about the progress the pupils made. This attention to detail, has helped you both to see where improvements have been made to pupils' achievements and where support and further intervention is needed. It is intended that this robust system of challenge will eventually be undertaken by the school with the governing body taking over the role of the challenge partner. In order to be able to model best practice and continue to challenge the senior leaders more we agreed that more members of the governing body need to attend future meetings over the next two terms.

Senior leaders, along with the governing body and the responsible 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:

- instigate the planned changes to the English curriculum this term rather than next and take similar action to strengthen the mathematics programme
- ensure all leaders have clear job descriptions, which reference the school action plan and introduce regular meetings to monitor progress being achieved to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- ensure that there are termly milestones for on-going work in all the school action and improvement plans
- provide external support and coaching for the deputy headteacher to help him to develop his leadership role
- ensure additional members of the governing body attend the case conferences and that all have further training in data interpretation.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector