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David Hall
Headteacher
Brackensdale Junior School
Walthamstow Drive
Mackworth Estate
Derby
DE22 4BS

Dear Mr Hall

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brackensdale Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 15 July 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body. I considered your monitoring of teaching and learning, and your most recent data on the attendance and achievement of pupils. I evaluated your school improvement plan. We conducted a tour of the school. I looked at samples of pupils' work and considered the quality of marking.

Context

Since the inspection, you have continued to provide support to another school for two days per week in your role as a Local Leader of Education. This support will finish at the end of July 2013.

The governing body has appointed an experienced teacher who will teach a mixed-age Year 5 and Year 6 class from September 2013 following the retirement of the current post-holder.

Main findings

Since the inspection, there has been a lack of urgency in tackling the areas identified for improvement.

Plans for improvement identify appropriate actions, however not enough of these have been tackled quickly enough to improve teaching. The plans do not contain sharp enough success criteria linked to pupils' progress and attainment so that governors can check on the extent to which actions have been successful.

You have introduced a new approach to marking and pupils are more involved in assessing each other's learning. However, pupils are at an early stage of responding consistently to the comments made by their teachers in order to reach their targets in English and mathematics.

Teachers are moderating pupils' work more frequently and ensuring that the assessment of pupils' learning is accurate. This is enabling you to track accurately how well individuals and groups of pupils are doing. The tracking reveals that pupils in Year 5 are under-achieving in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils' writing and topic books show that pupils have more opportunities in which to apply their skills in literacy in other subjects. However, they have fewer opportunities to do so in mathematics.

Although you are working with parents to reduce persistent absence, not enough pupils have improved their rates of attendance between the autumn and summer term.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- refine your school improvement plan by including sharper success criteria, so that governors and your senior leadership team can evaluate the impact of the school's actions to raise standards
- accelerate the progress of pupils in the current Year 5 cohort in English and mathematics
- ensure that pupils have more opportunities to respond to marking
- ensure that pupils have more opportunities to apply their learning in mathematics in different subjects
- improve the attendance of those pupils who have a history of persistent absence

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 has supported teachers to improve the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' work. The improvement officer has provided clear guidance on how to track and check the progress of groups of pupils. This has enabled senior leaders to identify those groups who are at risk of under-achieving. As a result, they are more aware of where they need to provide additional support.

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

Yours sincerely

David Carter
Her Majesty's Inspector