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Clare Longden
Headteacher
Wallbrook Primary School
Off Bradleys Lane
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Bilston
WV14 8YP

Dear Mrs Longden

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wallbrook Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 . It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. The school action plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the latest information about pupils' progress, feedback to teachers following lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work. During the visit, you joined me on brief visits to all classes.

Context

Since the last inspection, three members of staff have resigned and will leave the school at the end of term. Three new members of staff have been appointed and will join the school in September. One of these appointment includes a senior leader.

Main findings

You and the deputy headteacher have taken a range of appropriate actions to address the issues raised at the recent inspection. There has been a very clear focus on quickly improving the quality of teaching. Staff have received appropriate support and training from an external consultant and the local authority's mathematics adviser. You have established a system to help teachers to share best practice and learn from each other. Your monitoring files show that there is now more good teaching. However, there remains a small proportion of teaching that is not yet good and there is little evidence to show that good teaching is moving to outstanding. This is partly because you are not setting sufficient targets for this to happen but also because teachers do not have enough opportunities to observe and learn from outstanding practice. Documentation shows that you and the governors are aware of the need to link with an outstanding school but arrangements for this are not yet formalised. I recommend that work with an outstanding school begins as soon as possible. Your evidence shows improvements in the quality of teachers' marking, particularly in mathematics. Pupils talk positively about these changes.

Your records show that, as a result of better teaching, more pupils overall are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the amount of progress made by different groups of pupils is not yet sufficiently accelerated to make up for past underachievement. For example, boys have made better progress this term than in previous terms, but their progress is still not rapid enough to begin to narrow the gap between the achievement of boys at Wallbrook and the achievement of boys nationally. This is particularly evident in writing and mathematics. Systems for checking pupils' progress are very thorough but the information needs to be summarised clearly and used rapidly to inform teaching. Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' work. However, written feedback to teachers does not always identify the detailed actions that teachers need to take to help different groups of pupils make faster progress.

The school improvement plan focuses on the key areas of improving teaching and strengthening the leadership of teaching and learning. The actions identified to make these improvements are clear. The plan does not, however, state who will evaluate the impact of the actions in the plan.

Governors have a good understanding of what the school needs to do to become 'good' and have taken a range of appropriate actions since the inspection. A School Improvement Committee has been established with named governors linked to subject leaders. The group meet regularly. Documentation shows that governors are checking that the actions in the school improvement plan are helping to raise pupils' achievement. However, governors are not yet confident in understanding and evaluating school data on pupils' achievement independently. I recommend that additional training is organised to strengthen governors' understanding of this information so that they can develop their own view of how well pupils are doing.

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

- set appropriate targets to increase the amount of outstanding teaching
- summarise information on pupils' progress and use the information rapidly to inform teaching
- when providing written feedback to teachers, identify the detailed actions that teachers need to take in order to help different groups of pupils make faster progress
- clearly state who will evaluate the impact of actions in the school's improvement plan
- organise training and support to help governors to understand information about pupils' achievement independently.

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

Through regular visits from the local authority adviser you have received an appropriate level of support and challenge. Teachers have benefited from the mathematics training provided by the local authority's mathematics adviser. This has contributed to improvements in teachers' subject knowledge and a better quality of teaching. The local authority's Learning Support Service has provided good training and guidance for support staff. You have organised visits for support staff to observe staff in other schools. Evidence shows that this work has had a positive impact and made a significant difference to the progress of those pupils who work regularly with support staff, particularly those pupils who struggle to read well.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector