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Linda Shute
Headteacher
Rowdown Primary School
Calley Down Crescent
New Addington
CR0 0EG

Dear Ms Shute

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rowdown Primary School

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

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:

- ensure that all teachers have the same high expectations of how pupils should respond to marking and feedback.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair and two 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. A range of documents were scrutinised including: records of lesson observations, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance data and a report from the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection eight new teaching staff have been appointed, including five newly qualified teachers and two teachers from the 'Teach First' programme.

Main findings

The headteacher and senior leaders have acted decisively to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. The school's action plan is clear; timescales demonstrate a sense of urgency and there is a strong sense of collective responsibility amongst staff for making the necessary improvements. All are clear that the expectation has been to 'hit the ground running', following the last inspection.

The impact of recent changes can already be seen in teachers' planning, which is checked weekly by school leaders. Planning documents are more sharply focused on providing activities which are matched to the full range of pupils' abilities. The role of additional adults is also more explicitly referenced; this has enabled teaching assistants to provide more effective support to pupils. Most teachers' marking shows pupils how to improve, and pupils' responses show gains in understanding as a result. However, this practice is not consistent across all classes and year groups.

Since the beginning of this term half of the teaching staff have been observed. Regular learning walks by the headteacher focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement. Leaders have carefully considered how good practice can be shared amongst teachers; newly-qualified teachers are well-supported by more experienced colleagues. Where a concern is identified with the quality of teaching, this is quickly followed up and appropriate support and monitoring is put into place. Paired observations have developed the skills of leaders in judging the quality and impact of teaching. Teachers have benefited from targeted training and from opportunities to observe good practice at a local outstanding school.

Expectations of the progress pupils should be making have been raised; targets are more ambitious and recognise the need to accelerate the progress of different groups of pupils. There has been a clear focus to strengthen the quality of the teaching of English, so that pupils make better progress. Leaders have carefully scrutinised the quality of teachers' assessments to ensure that pupils' progress is being accurately tracked.

Analysis of 2013 data shows a rise in attainment at Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics. At Key Stage 2, attainment is also higher than in 2012. However, school leaders rightly recognise that they need to make further improvements to ensure that this improving trend is sustained. Additional resources have been put into place to improve the teaching of phonics and to develop pupils' reading and writing skills more rapidly.

The school has reviewed its systems for improving pupils' attendance and plans to increase the level of education welfare support it receives. Tracking shows that the attendance of pupils has improved since the beginning of term, when compared with the same period last year.

Led by the Chair, governors have increased the level of challenge to school leaders about the achievement of pupils at the school. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They ask probing questions about the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and are scrutinising the achievement of different groups of pupils more closely. There is a strong sense of urgency amongst governors about the pace of the school in getting to good. The Chair is clear that the governing body will not 'wait for things to happen'. Governors' skills have been carefully matched to working groups, which are focusing on the areas in which the school needs to rapidly improve.

External support

The local authority has increased its level and range of support since the last inspection. Visits from a local authority consultant have been effective in developing stronger practice in the teaching of English. The school's link adviser has worked closely with the headteacher to ensure that the action plan is sharply focused on areas for improvement. The local authority has planned a teaching and learning monitoring visit in November to assess the rate at which improvements are taking place and to identify any further support needed.

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

Yours sincerely

Russell Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector