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18 October 2013

Graham Bollands
Headteacher
St Ann's Heath Junior School
Sandhills Lane
Virginia Water
Surrey
GU25 4DS

Dear Mr Bollands

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Ann's Heath Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 senior leaders have a clear plan indicating how they will follow up any teaching that is less than good.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and three members of the Governing Body, including the Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I went on a tour of the school to visit all classes.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in July one member of staff has left the school. The subject leader for mathematics returned from maternity leave at the beginning of term. Two teaching assistants have been appointed. The Vice-Chair of the Governing Body at the time of the previous inspection has now been elected as Chair of Governors.

Main findings

Following the inspection that took place in July, school leaders have taken prompt action to improve the teaching of mathematics. The school action plan is focused on what needs to be improved and leadership roles and responsibilities have been precisely restructured to focus on the key priorities. Teachers have performance management targets based on the progress their pupils make in mathematics. However, the steps that leaders will take to follow up teaching that still requires improvement are not clear.

The deputy headteacher is now responsible for improving the attainment and progress of pupils who need extra help, including pupils with special educational needs and those who are eligible for free school meals. The subject leader for mathematics is taking urgent action to improve teaching and achievement in mathematics. With careful consideration and advice from the local authority advisory team, senior leaders have wisely taken the decision to restructure teaching groups in mathematics.

Teachers now work in subject teams for English and mathematics across the year groups. In this way they can plan together, share good practice and take more responsibility for their areas. Short-, medium- and long-term lesson plans are appropriately detailed: teachers are also introducing mathematical concepts into other subjects and topic work. School leaders are able to provide sound evidence that pupils of all abilities are already benefiting from working in their new groups: more-able pupils benefit from greater challenges and having to provide verbal explanations of their mathematical reasoning. Less able pupils are developing better approaches to solving mathematical problems, by working alongside more confident pupils.

School leaders are making sure that there is a sharper focus on ensuring that programmes of extra help are properly suited to pupils' needs. For example, the subject leader for mathematics is teaching a programme of additional lessons for a targeted group of Year 6 pupils who need extra support with word problems in mathematics.

School leaders shrewdly raised the profile of mathematics across the whole school. A mathematics magician, clown and theatre group inspired pupils and parents in performances and workshops this term. The exciting and positive impact of this event is visible around the school. In each classroom there are inspiring working walls for mathematics, showing photographs of good work, mathematics achievements and helpful examples of techniques for pupils to use. Pupils are now justly rewarded with 'special mentions' for progress in mathematics.

Senior leaders have rightly acknowledged that marking needs to improve. There is a clear plan in place to make sure that teachers mark pupils' independent mathematics work thoroughly, giving precise targets and areas to improve. Pupils are then expected to respond to their teachers' comments and improve their work. Senior leaders have also correctly identified that not all classrooms have enough resources to support mathematics, so they are ensuring that all rooms are supplied with the right equipment.

Governors have restructured their committees to streamline their roles and ensure that they are focused on the areas for improvement. Governors are more involved in the day-to-day work of the school: they provide regular updates at staff meetings and visit lessons more frequently. They are also in the process of carefully evaluating their skills and expertise in order to identify any training needs.

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 had identified the school as needing support in 2011 when pupils' progress raised some concerns. Since the section 5 inspection the school has become a high priority. The school leadership partner works closely with school leaders, ensuring that pupil progress meetings are challenging and that the school leaders bring about rapid and sustained improvement. The local authority advisors have jointly observed teaching with school leaders and have validated their judgements. The local authority has ensured that high quality advisory support for mathematics is in place and will continue. The school is part of a local partnership of schools, which provides useful opportunities for sharing good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector