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Mrs B Hewitt-Best
Headteacher
Newham Bridge Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hewitt-Best

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Newham Bridge Primary School, Middlesbrough

Following my visit to your school on 7 November 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 September 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's leaders have been invited to attend an Ofsted 'getting to good' seminar very shortly, but the school still needs to firm up a date for a review of governance. The school is wisely waiting for the availability of a suitably skilled and experienced individual who has been recommended to them by the local authority.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement action plans were evaluated. The inspector also scrutinised a number of documents. These included information on how the pupil premium funding was being used and samples of

recent minutes of meetings of the governing body. The inspector toured the school with the headteacher and observed one phonics lesson, covering two groups.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing since the inspection, but a number of changes to management roles were made in September 2013 and shortly after the inspection. The senior leadership team is, therefore, a new team overall.

Main findings

The school's leaders have swiftly established suitable plans to move the school towards 'good' at their next inspection. Real changes are being made to ensure this. There are clear milestones identified along the way and the means by which the school will measure the impact of what it is doing. Plans are sharply focused on the areas for improvement that were identified at the inspection, with a view to rapidly bringing about improvement. They draw also on the review conducted by the local authority in the summer term, prior to the inspection. In this way, leaders have lost no time in merely discussing issues; they have moved straight to action.

Early impact can be seen in areas of the schools work highlighted below.

- The re-invigorated senior leadership team brings a range of essential expertise in literacy, special needs and the use of data to drive forward the pace of change. Roles are clear and well-focused on improvement.
- Changes to how classes are organised to accelerate the pace of learning. For example, phonics teaching in the Early Years is now arranged in two ability groups and progress in acquiring sounds and letters is accelerating.
- Higher expectations on the part of staff for what children can do. More challenging targets have been set for what all children should achieve. The school's assessment of teachers' performance is now linked to these, more specific, higher targets. Robust systems for performance and pay tie in to the areas for improvement.
- Staff teaching expertise is to be strengthened through a planned programme of training and development. This has already included helpful visits to other schools and the sharing of existing good practice within the school.
- Growing links with the nursery on site mean staff are getting to know children earlier and, where appropriate, can work more closely with families at an early stage. Children share the library, encouraging an early love of stories.
- Suitable actions are being taken to improve children's writing.
- Regular observations of lessons by senior staff are strengthening an accurate, up-to-date view of the quality of teaching. This is fostering open dialogue about improving teaching. Teaching assistants' skills are being strengthened.
- Governors are keen to build up their skills, including their understanding of data related to pupils' progress. Minutes of a very recent committee meeting of governors show that challenging questions were being asked about pupils' end-of-

year results. Governors intend to add more specific targets on pupils' achievement into the performance management arrangements for the new headteacher. The next full meeting of the governing body is focusing on raising governors' awareness of the processes that will be involved in the planned review of governance.

The school is in the early stages of planning to increase the scope and pace of improvement, by extending the school buildings to provide extra classroom space. This has the potential to reduce the size of some classes.

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 school is drawing well on the external support that is being provided by the local authority, in particular through membership of the Middlesbrough Schools Teachers' Alliance (MSTA). The local authority has provided good support for drawing up action plans, for staff training and for visits to other schools to observe outstanding practice. The MSTA, a group of five local schools, offers good opportunities for the headteacher and senior staff to share ideas and gain advice. This works two ways: the deputy headteacher, for example, shares expertise on literacy with other schools.
- Impact can be seen in well-focused plans for improvement and fresh ideas to promote pupils' progress further. It is recommended that the school continues to draw on these sources of support as it identifies aspects of its work that could benefit from further advice.
- It is recommended that training for governors includes how to interpret the 'data dashboard' of key indicators; and the charts in RAISE online that compare pupils' rates of progress with the national picture. This would help to equip governors better to be able to ask pertinent, challenging questions about pupils' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon

Her Majesty's Inspector