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21 November 2013

Ms L Tamblyn
Headteacher
Burraton Community Primary School
Fairmead Road
Saltash
PL12 4LT

Dear Ms Tamblyn

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Burraton Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in September 2012. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of serious weaknesses.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cornwall.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2012.

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise attainment and improve the achievement of all pupils by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are given work that appropriately extends their skills and knowledge, including work for the more able that enables them to reach the higher levels
 - significantly improving the proportion of good teaching by helping teachers to inject more pace and challenge into their lessons and to devise more interesting activities
 - training teachers to make better use of support staff to help the learning of individual pupils
 - improving teachers' skill and confidence in teaching pupils how to read by linking letters and sounds
 - developing teachers' skill and confidence in teaching mathematics to a higher level, through introducing more modelling of good practice.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels to secure and sustain school improvement by:
 - monitoring teaching and learning more rigorously, focusing on improving basic skills and holding teachers more to account for pupils' progress
 - enhancing the role of subject leaders in analysing progress and monitoring teaching and learning
 - linking professional development more closely to teachers' individual needs by observing each teacher to identify aspects of their work that require improvement and examples of good practice that they can share with others
 - ensuring that the governing body as a whole is fully engaged in monitoring progress, ensuring that plans for raising attainment and improving progress are rigorously implemented, and holding leaders and other staff to account.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 20 November 2013

Evidence

The inspector visited six lessons including two short sessions focusing on teaching letters and the sounds they make (phonics). The inspector examined pupils' written work and heard pupils reading. Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, pupils and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority. The inspector talked informally with parents and carers in the playground and took account of 48 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Responses to the school's own questionnaires for parents, carers and staff were also considered. A range of documents were examined including information on pupils' attainment and the progress they make, self-evaluation, governance and improvement planning.

Context

There have been several changes in staffing since the second monitoring inspection. In September, the substantive deputy headteacher and three teachers joined the school. These appointments replaced temporary staff and supply cover. At the time of the inspection, the mathematics subject leader was absent and the subject was being led by members of the senior leadership team.

The Secretary of State for Education has approved plans for the school to become a sponsored academy in January 2014.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher, the governing body and the wider leadership team have vigorously advanced the improvements that were identified at the second monitoring inspection. Standards are rising rapidly because there is more good teaching than was previously the case. The school is now well placed to fully establish these improvements before the next section 5 inspection.

The headteacher has successfully communicated a shared vision for the school. Under her determined and systematic leadership, the school has remained focused on tackling the priorities for improvement. Monitoring procedures continue to be exceptionally thorough and there are more robust systems in place to hold staff to account. Increasingly, individual staff are taking action to improve their teaching and the leadership responsibilities are now distributed widely. Subject and phase leaders are more involved in checking how well pupils are doing. They confidently take on additional responsibilities such as teaching English and mathematics to the whole year group to cover for staff absence. The new deputy headteacher has established himself quickly by taking a lead in the training of staff and demonstrating highly effective teaching within his own classroom. Several teachers have improved aspects of their teaching as result of observing colleagues in their own school and beyond.

The local authority's growing confidence in the school is evidenced by the arrangements it has brokered for the school to share the emerging strengths with other schools.

The governing body is now fully engaged in checking the school's work. The Chair of the Governing Body has a better understanding of the actions being taken as a result of attending staff training and meetings of the senior leadership team. Responsibilities are shared widely so all governors are increasingly involved. For example, the governor who oversees safeguarding regularly examines the single central record of checks made on staff and volunteers. At the time of the inspection, the school's procedures met current government requirements. Other governors are kept well informed of developments through frequent discussions with subject and phase leaders. In meetings, governors increasingly ask leaders to account for the school's performance. The school's transition to becoming an academy has been managed adequately, but information should have been provided to staff at an earlier stage of the process. The governing body has effective procedures in place to respond to parents' and carers' concerns. However, the policy for managing complaints lacks information about when and how frequently it will be reviewed.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Incidents of inadequate teaching have been eradicated and at times the quality of teaching is now outstanding. The school continues to make good use of the most effective teaching to develop the skills of all teachers.
- In the more successful lessons seen, teachers set high expectations of what pupils can learn and use their secure knowledge of the subject to explain important concepts. The pupils make rapid progress in their learning because teachers question pupils incisively and adapt the teaching accordingly. In these lessons, teaching assistants are deployed well so they make a strong contribution to pupils' learning.
- Standards are rising quickly across the school because tasks are matched more closely to pupils' needs and abilities. Increasing proportions of pupils are attaining the levels expected for their age and more of the most-able pupils are reaching the higher National Curriculum levels. Despite repeated changes in staffing, last year's Year 6 pupils regained much of the ground that was lost due to previously weak teaching.
- Pupils have a clearer understanding of how to improve their work and the actions they must take to raise their attainment. This is because the agreed approaches for marking, display and pupil self-evaluation are used more consistently.
- Improvements to the way that letters and sounds (phonics) are taught have raised pupils' attainment in reading. Standards now exceed those expected at each age in most year groups. An above-average proportion of Year 1 pupils reached the required standards in the national phonics screening check and the proportion of Year 6 pupils that attained Level 5 in reading was significantly higher than most other schools.

- Parents' and carers' confidence in the school has grown because they recognise the improvements that have taken place. They value the frequent opportunities they now have to learn with their child and look through their written work in books.
- Pupils' attitudes towards learning have continued to improve. In lessons, pupils listen attentively and respond keenly to the instructions they are given. During the inspection, pupils explained earnestly how their training as playground buddies and the rewards and new behaviour policy have improved behaviour at break times. Consequently, support staff now express much more positive views about the standard of behaviour

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good. In lessons where teaching requires improvement, not all pupils understand the learning intentions, the level of challenge is inconsistent and pupils' misunderstandings go unchecked.
- The teaching of early literacy skills remains variable. Staff do not always demonstrate clearly how to pronounce letter sounds (phonemes) or rigorously check that individuals can enunciate the phoneme being taught. Not enough of the pupils in Year 2 met the required standard in last year's national phonic recheck.
- Standards in writing remain too low because pupils' achievement is weaker than in reading and mathematics. The legacy of underachievement is shrinking rapidly, but pupils leaving the school last year had made significantly less progress in writing across Key Stage 2 when compared to those in other schools. Recent improvements in presentation and handwriting have not ensured that all pupils use an appropriate pencil grip and learn to write with a pen as early as possible.
- The gaps between the attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils in the school are closing quickly, but they remain too wide. Last year, the attainment in mathematics of Year 6 pupils that were eligible for free school meals was around 11 months behind that of their peers.
- Improvements to the way that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported are not yet established across the school so their rates of progress continue to be uneven, especially for those pupils that are supported at school action plus.

External support

The school's reliance on external support has reduced substantially because staff now play a greater role in directing improvements. The local authority has monitored the school's progress carefully. Detailed feedback from school improvement officers has ensured that senior leaders know how successfully weaknesses are being tackled. The pace of improvement has quickened because leaders have an accurate understanding of where further improvement is required.

The headteacher has improved systems for managing staff performance and developed the roles of middle leaders as a result of support from a Local Leader in Education, brokered by the local authority. Specialist teaching in English and mathematics from a local secondary school contributed to the improved results for last year's Year 6 pupils and eased their transition to their next school. Initial training from an independent consultant, brokered by a neighboring local authority, has improved the teaching of speaking, listening and writing skills in two classes. Plans are in place to extend this training to all classes.