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26 November 2013

Mrs Ann Hurfurt
Headteacher
Odessa Infant School
Wellington Road
London
E7 9BY

Dear Mrs Hurfurt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Odessa Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 26 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 October 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:

- strengthen the action plan with the addition of headline targets for pupils' attainment and progress; be clear about how the impact of actions is measured, by whom and when; and involve governors and external partners in the process of measuring the impact of actions
- ensure that assessments of children's starting points are accurate to form a baseline from which future targets are set and pupils' progress over time can be measured.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of staff. You took me to some classrooms to show me some of the changes that have been made since the inspection. I evaluated the action plan.

Main findings

The outcome of the inspection has stimulated change. The action plan contains relevant steps and reflects accurately each point for improvement identified during the inspection. Hence, it has an appropriate focus on improving the quality of teaching. The timeframe for actions is clear. The plan would benefit from sharper and, where possible, numerical targets by which you and other leaders can measure whether or not the actions have had the desired effect. To that end, headline targets relating to pupils' rates of progress and their levels of attainment would be helpful. It is not entirely clear from the plan how, when and by whom actions will be checked. It is important to involve governors in this process as well as external partners. Although staff are not aware of the detail of the action plan they are clear about the main priorities for improvement and their role in helping the school to become good.

You have made a positive start on taking action. For example, all staff have been trained in teaching phonics. Much work has been done to improve the quality of teachers' lesson planning. Teaching assistants report that they are much clearer about what they need to do to help pupils. Being identified by name on lesson plans helps them feel involved in supporting pupils' learning and makes them accountable for it. During our brief visits to classes I saw that additional adults had a clear focus on supporting pupils. Staff report that the inspection has made the team stronger. They realise the need to stretch and challenge the more able pupils. They are positive about the increased level of monitoring which they see as supportive. They consider that the feedback from the deputy headteacher on the quality of their planning is fair, balanced and offers useful suggestions. You have changed the timings of sessions during the day to allow more time for guided reading. Although staff consider that this has already made a positive difference to pupils' reading skills, you have yet to evaluate the impact formally.

You plan to implement a programme of interventions to help pupils in Years 1 and 2 catch up where they need to make more progress. I suggested that you make sure that the information you have on children's starting points in nursery is accurate. This is so that the baseline for setting future targets is secure and so that you can be sure that gaps do not widen during the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Governors admit that they were too accepting of the information that you gave them about pupils' progress and have begun to ask more searching questions. Your new system for tracking pupils' progress will enable information to be presented more

clearly than in the past. I recommended Ofsted's report '*School governance: learning from the best*'. I also suggested that there is no need to wait for the external review of governance to be carried out in January before strengthening governors' role in monitoring the impact of the action plan.

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 has put in place a number of well-considered measures to support the school. Direct support has been offered to leaders to improve the action plan and consultants are due to visit the school to moderate assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority has commissioned support from a National Leader of Education from a nearby school. Newham Partnership Working has devised a programme of support for governors, which includes an external review. In addition, you have arranged training for staff and devised plans to visit good and outstanding schools in the local area. It is too early to demonstrate any impact of these actions on the quality of provision or on pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector