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Sharon Jones
Headteacher
Micklands Primary School
Micklands Road
Caversham
Reading
RG4 6LU

Dear Mrs Jones

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Micklands Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Wednesday 11 December, 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 should take further action to:

- strengthen the school development plan by including evaluations to be undertaken by the governing body or an independent party.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and members of the Governing Body. A phone call was held with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was scrutinised including notes of visits from local authority officers, the headteacher's report to governors and pupil attainment and progress data. I visited all classes briefly with the headteacher.

Context

A number of appointments have been made since the last inspection including; six teaching assistants, three mid-day supervisors, three after school club assistants and one teacher. The leadership team has been re-structured.

Main findings

The headteacher has used the inspection findings in a measured and well-considered manner to bring about the necessary changes needed at the school. All staff have been included in devising carefully thought out actions which have developed a unified approach. A constant theme reported during my visit was the knowledge that where procedures and policies had been agreed, everyone knew they had to be followed. Performance management targets are now linked directly to pupils' progress. This, combined with six weekly review meetings, is holding staff more robustly to account for the performance of pupils in their class. New systems to track the performance of pupils are being used by all staff to identify quickly where pupils are falling behind. A new set of 'non-negotiables' for classroom practice is raising expectations of all staff. A supportive structure of 'lesson study' has been established for any teachers that are not yet performing consistently well. Team managers are expected to follow up any issues or concerns robustly.

The school development plan is a well devised and clear document. It is linked precisely to the recommendations of the inspection report. It includes appropriate actions and timescales in relation to how the school will improve the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils learning. The plan would benefit from external evaluations being added for governors so they are not solely reliant on information provided by the school when checking on the success of actions.

Training for teachers to improve the quality of their marking and feedback is leading to more appropriate matching of activities to pupils' needs. Regular opportunities to assess pupils' writing are developing the teachers' skills in identifying next steps in pupils' learning. Support for the teaching of phonics is developing a more consistent and systematic approach to the teaching of reading. Short visits to classes on my visit confirmed the strategies are developing well. A sharp focus on problem solving and investigations in mathematics is stimulating pupils' enjoyment in the subject. The re-organisation of classes in Years 5 and 6 for the teaching of English and mathematics is resulting in more focussed teaching and rapidly improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.

The governing body quickly responded to the previous inspection by requesting better information from the school on the progress and attainment of all pupils. Fortnightly meetings between the Chair and the headteacher are providing more opportunities to challenge the work of the school. Informative reports from the headteacher are enabling governors to ask precise questions about the performance of pupils. Governors have a clear understanding of the success of initiatives to

improve the performance of all pupils including those eligible for the pupil premium. Attendance at a recent Ofsted seminar, Getting to Good, has reinforced to governors that the school is taking all the right steps to become good. Governors recognise that the use of external evaluations would enable them to contribute even more strongly to school developments.

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 advisor and the headteacher have worked closely to co-ordinate a range of support for leaders and governors. A comprehensive package of support focusses sharply on improving teaching and pupils' learning. Consultant training to improve the quality of guided writing has improved teachers' skills in identifying the precise level pupils are working at and their next steps in learning. A demonstration mathematics lesson for teachers using pupils at the school provided staff with a clear picture of what high quality teaching looks like to inform their practice. On-going guidance for English and mathematics is already planned.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector