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30 April 2014

Mr Adrian McNeillis
Consultant Headteacher
Brookside Junior School
Dagnam Park Drive
Romford
RM3 9DJ

Dear Mr McNeillis

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Brookside Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 29 April 2014, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses, following the section 5 inspection which took place in January 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

- The school is not making enough progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation. The monitoring visit raises serious concerns about the skills of the Governing Body in holding leaders and themselves to account for the progress of the school.

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 Havering.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2013.

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in mathematics so that they are consistently good by:
 - implementing a programme of staff training to improve subject leadership and teachers' mathematical knowledge and expertise
 - giving the more able pupils harder work so they can reach higher levels
 - tailoring support programmes to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs more effectively
 - enabling pupils to develop and apply their skills through practical activities across other subjects and topics, and giving them more opportunities to solve mathematical problems
 - ensuring that teachers' marking gives pupils specific guidance on how to improve their work and that pupils act on this advice.

- Ensure that pupil premium funding is used to best effect by:
 - putting in place specific teaching programmes to meet the individual needs of pupils eligible for support from this funding
 - checking the impact of these programmes in accelerating pupils' progress and rapidly closing the gap with pupils nationally.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 29 April 2014

Evidence

I met with you and your deputy and assistant headteacher, the new Chair of the Governing Body, and a parent governor. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority by telephone. Your school development plan, information about pupils' achievement, minutes of governing body meetings, information about your monitoring of teaching and monitoring reports by the local authority were scrutinised. We visited lessons together to observe teaching and look at pupils' work.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit in March 2013, there have been three changes of headteacher and the current headteacher is currently only acting in a consultative role. A new assistant headteacher joined the school in September 2013 and a new deputy headteacher joined in the spring term. Over 50% of the teaching staff have left and been replaced since the first monitoring visit. There are two newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in Year 5 and Year 4. The Chair of the Governing Body resigned in January 2014, and a new Chair has been in post for two weeks. The school is scheduled to convert to an academy on 1 June 2014, sponsored by Drapers' Academy.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Over the last 18 months, significant turbulence in staffing and leadership has affected the progress of the school. The lack of stability at senior and middle leadership level has led to continual change, with many new initiatives for teaching and planning beginning and then changing. There has been no clear plan for developing literacy and numeracy in all subjects until recently. The leadership of teaching and processes for checking the quality of teachers' planning and marking were not sufficiently robust. Over-reliance on the grading of lessons has skewed the checks on the quality of teaching over time at the school, and as a result, leaders have an over-generous view. Too little attention has been paid to scrutinising and improving the quality of pupils' work in their topic books as well as their English and mathematics books. Achievement of all pupils is not improving quickly enough and gaps remain in the progress of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding.

You and your senior leaders are now tackling these significant weaknesses. Since January, you have reviewed the quality of planning, teaching and marking in all classes. You are helping teachers understand that judgements about the typicality of teaching over time are based upon observations in lessons, scrutinising pupils' work and data about pupils' achievement. You rightly judge that too little teaching is securely good. Your support for teachers is helping them review their planning and consider more thoroughly how they meet the needs of different abilities in their

classes. Nevertheless, this is not yet embedded in classroom practice on a routine daily basis.

Your assistant headteacher, who joined the school in September 2013, has worked tirelessly to establish a literacy strategy to better support pupils' reading and writing. This is starting to help teachers plan a range of activities to help improve pupils' reading. Training for teachers to help them develop pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling is coming to fruition in lessons and there are more opportunities for extended writing.

Changes to the subject leadership for mathematics have held back improvements to mathematics teaching. Most Year 6 pupils are catching up with learning mathematical knowledge and skills that they should have developed in Year 5 and Year 4. You are using commercially produced materials for mathematics teaching and your new deputy headteacher is working with teachers to help them improve their planning. You and your team know that there is not yet consistently good mathematics teaching to remedy the legacy of underachievement.

The regularity of marking is improving and pupils' work shows praise and encouragement. Inconsistency in the quality of guidance to help pupils improve their work remains. Some marking does not stretch pupils' thinking and too little requires pupils to 'have a go' at harder work. Some pupils respond diligently to teachers' comments but others do not.

Your school development plan includes key priorities and milestones for checking the impact of leaders' work. There are clear roles and responsibilities for your leaders. During my visit, we discussed the need for the success criteria in your plan to include more quantifiable criteria about the progress of groups of pupils.

Following the section 5 inspection and the first monitoring visit, governors did not act quickly enough to complete the external review of governance and agree a bespoke training package to develop their knowledge and skills. Once the review was complete by the autumn term, the findings were rejected, further impeding the progress of the governing body. The significant time devoted to discussions about academy conversion were not balanced with tackling the weaknesses in teaching and achievement at the school. Until recently, governors have not monitored the impact of the impact of the pupil premium funding. Governors do not have a comprehensive understanding of their strengths and exactly what they need to know and do better to establish good governance. However, they do know that there is an urgent need to improve their understanding of information about pupils' achievement and be able to ask questions about pupils' performance compared with expectations nationally. The new and experienced Chair understands the current situation well. He understands the urgency needed to develop much better governance and is arranging additional support for governors. They are keen to receive this training and are committed to improving their work.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Senior leaders are setting high expectations for pupils' behavior and attitudes to learning. Pupils say that expectations about behaviour are clear and they want to learn and do well.
- Senior leaders are analysing incisively information about pupils' achievement and can identify pupils who are working below expectations and falling behind. Senior leaders know where the gaps in pupils' achievement remain and they have a good grasp of which interventions are working and which are not.
- The overhaul of the programme for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is helping staff and leaders pinpoint precisely what support pupils need. The consultant headteacher and deputy headteacher have reviewed and redeployed teaching assistants, with a clear rationale for changes made. Achievement information about the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is increasingly accurate.
- The review of the use of pupil premium funding is of good quality. It is providing a much sharper picture of the impact of the funding on pupils' progress and holding staff to account for their work with individuals and groups of pupils who receive additional support.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Planning and teaching for the most able pupils are not providing sufficient challenge to accelerate their progress.
- Not all teachers are using achievement information well enough to plan lessons that include work at different levels matched to differing abilities.
- The quality of teaching across the school is inconsistent. Too little is good and some teaching does not set high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent and lacking in rigour to help all pupils know how to improve their work.
- Governance is not improving quickly enough. Governors are unable to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to rigorously hold leaders to account for school improvement.

External support

The local authority's support had included visits by advisers for English and mathematics, and monitoring by the school improvement team. Advisers are supporting teachers planning and classroom practice but the impact of this work was, until recently, diluted by changes in leadership. Through the regular meetings of the strategic monitoring board, the local authority is checking rigorously the progress of the school. Support to develop better governance is urgently required.