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Heather Causon
Headteacher
Newbold Verdon Primary School
Dragon Lane
Newbold Verdon
Leicester
LE9 9NG

Dear Mrs Causon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Newbold Verdon Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. 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 month and year. 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:

- increase the variety of activities through which the headteacher and senior leaders assess the quality of teaching
- amend the school action plan so that it lists the individuals responsible for taking, monitoring and evaluating actions, and states milestones for reviewing success.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, two representatives of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated.

Main findings

You fully agree with the findings of your recent inspection which confirmed your own judgements on the school. A lot of work is underway to improve the school and some actions are already having a positive impact.

Immediately after your inspection, all members of staff agreed a consistent approach to how pupils should present their work. Leaders of literacy and mathematics produced age-appropriate examples of best practice in presentation which are displayed in each classroom. These are beginning to have the desired impact. Teachers now insist on work being presented well; pupils who occasionally do not meet this standard have to re-do tasks in their own time. Standards of presentation are improving steadily.

Prior to your recent inspection, members of staff did not have a consistent approach to handwriting. This has now changed and a new policy has been introduced. After the introduction of this policy, pupils pointed out that all teachers were not practising what they preached; all teachers are now doing so in this regard. Handwriting in the school is more consistent.

From next week, all teachers will spend 15 minutes every day teaching pupils grammar. This replaces the current, weekly session which has not had sufficient impact on progress.

You have increased pupils' opportunities to develop their writing skills, particularly through providing real-life contexts. Year 6 pupils have written formal letters to your school's office clerk asking for work experience, and they are eagerly awaiting the outcome. Year 5 pupils have written to local businesses asking them to donate prizes for a raffle. One reluctant writer received vouchers for a free meal. As a result, he has been enthused and he is keen to write more often. Your strategy is successful in showing pupils that there is a positive purpose to writing.

Some of your more-able pupils are benefitting from a greater challenge. This was seen to best effect in Year 2 mathematics, where a small group of more-able pupils were encouraged to attempt more advanced methods of addition. Teachers are increasingly directing more-able pupils to your afternoon 'buzz groups' so they can receive support in successfully addressing more challenging tasks.

Strategies to extend pupils' vocabulary are more visible in classrooms. Topic-related vocabulary lists are displayed to promote better expression. Year 3 pupils used these to good effect when thinking of adjectives to describe size.

Teachers are now sharing best practice on a weekly basis. Colleagues are paired to plan more effective lessons. Furthermore, each teacher chooses two lessons from their weekly planning which all colleagues contribute ideas to with the aim of making the lesson more interesting for pupils. Pupils are more excited by these lessons though there is no evidence of impact on achievement at present.

The needs of those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, because they are especially vulnerable, in Years 1 and 2 are being better met. A qualified teacher is now working two afternoons a week with these pupils; this is beginning to have a small, positive impact on their achievement.

As headteacher, you acknowledge that you should extend your methods of monitoring the quality of teaching through, for example, conducting more regular, focused learning walks and examining the progress pupils are making in their learning and quality of planning, teaching and marking, by looking at pupils' work.

The governing body met soon after your inspection to consider the findings in great detail. As a result, they were able to make informed contributions to the creation of a new action plan. This plan, while containing many appropriate actions and objectives, must be revised to ensure that it clearly details who is responsible for doing what, and when and how the responsible person's actions will be evaluated. It currently lacks clarity and will therefore not be as effective as necessary.

Since the inspection, one new governor has been recruited and another has taken responsibility for arranging a programme of training for governors. To assist in this, a skills audit is imminent. The Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body will soon receive training on how to effectively manage your performance.

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 representative of the local authority has worked closely with you since you took up post in September 2013. She visited the school shortly after your recent inspection and contributed to your revised action plan. She has been effective in supporting your improvements in tracking the progress made by pupils. She has been particularly helpful in identifying the achievement of pupil groups, rather than individuals. The local authority is committed to supporting your school until its next full inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector