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11 September 2014

Louise Crocker
Headteacher
Michaelchurch Escley Primary School
Michaelchurch Escley
Hereford
HR2 0PT

Dear Mrs Crocker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Michaelchurch Escley Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 September 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 June 2014. 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:

- ensure the action plan clearly states who will monitor the improvement actions taken
- ensure that pupils understand the purpose and focus of their learning in each lesson
- enable governors undertake training to support them in discharging their roles and responsibilities fully
- fully involve governors in monitoring activities to enable them to find out for themselves how the school is performing.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and three members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. In addition, a telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The

school action plan was evaluated along with other documents relating to school improvement. We visited both classrooms to talk to pupils and look at the work in their books.

Context

Since the last inspection the Key Stage 2 teacher has left the school. A restructure of staffing has been completed and a deputy headteacher position created and filled. The headteacher's contract has been increased from two to three days a week.

Main findings

You have an accurate view of the areas for improvement and have begun to take action to tackle them. With the change in your contract from two days to three, and the appointment of a deputy headteacher the capacity of the school to make the necessary improvements has increased. You are aware of the scale of the challenges ahead and have produced a plan, which outlines a range of appropriate actions that have the potential to address the issues raised in the recent inspection. However, the plan is not sufficiently clear about the expected impact of the actions or who will monitor their effectiveness. The role of governors is not made clear in the plan. You have agreed to send the plan to Her Majesty's Inspector once it has been revised. Quite rightly you are in the process of reassessing training requirements as a result of the recent changes in staffing.

You have introduced a new scheme of learning based around interesting topics in order to fulfil the requirements of the new National Curriculum. This is in the early stages of development but plans are in place to review its effectiveness each half term. The newly appointed deputy headteacher has written new guidance for computing. This is to ensure that pupils have regular and meaningful opportunities to develop their skills in this area.

A new marking policy has been introduced. There is some evidence in pupils' books that teachers are providing pupils with advice on how to improve their work, however it is too soon to measure the impact of this.

During our visit to the Key Stage 2 class the objective for the lesson was clearly visible on the whiteboard. In discussions with pupils it was clear that they had not fully understood the objective or the reason for it being displayed on the board. Similarly in the Key Stage 1 class pupils were not able to talk about what they were doing or what they were expected to learn or get better at. This was preventing pupils from being clear about how they would succeed. There is still much work to be done to ensure that pupils understand the purpose and the focus of their learning.

Governors are committed and dedicated and share the headteacher's vision that the school should become good as quickly as possible. The governors who spoke with

Her Majesty's Inspector were knowledgeable about the areas for improvement and the steps being taken to address them, including the implementation of the marking policy and the newly introduced curriculum. However, governors acknowledge that whilst there is a broad range of skills within the governing body, training is required to ensure that governors discharge their duties to the best of their ability and are able to ask appropriately challenging questions of senior leaders.

External support

The plans that the local authority have in place to support the school are appropriate. Additional funding has been provided to enable staff to access additional training and plans are in place for a partnership to be developed with another school in the local authority area. The local authority advisor plans to provide challenge to school leaders in a variety of ways, including through a programme of joint lesson observations.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie
Her Majesty's Inspector