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Paul Clayton
Executive Headteacher
Heathfield Infant School
Cobbett Road
Twickenham
TW2 6EN

Dear Mr Clayton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Heathfield Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 11 September, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. Thank you 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 April 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 strategic plan has specific monitoring activity to check each priority
- tighten up governors' role in monitoring the impact of the strategic plan.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A phone call was made with a member of the governing body. The inspector spoke informally to parents at the start of the day. Brief visits were made to all classrooms. A range of documentation was reviewed including children's work, records to monitor school improvement, attendance and safeguarding information. The strategic plan was evaluated.

Context

The interim headteacher is now the executive headteacher for both infant and junior schools. Five teachers left the school in July. A newly appointed assistant headteacher has joined the restructured leadership team. The new federated governing body were constituted from 1 September 2014.

Main findings

Since the recent inspection a new leadership team is in place made up of staff from the infant and junior school. Each leader has specific responsibilities to lead current priorities. They are held to account by regular, focussed leadership meetings, presentations to governors and performance management. This rigour and accountability is new. It is promoting clear improvements against the areas identified from the recent inspection report.

Senior leaders direct the school's work strongly using a detailed strategic plan. They use a wide range of monitoring and evaluation activity to check the progress of each priority. Some of these checks are too general however, which affects precision in the quality of evidence collected against success criteria.

Middle leaders are supported effectively by senior staff and feel confident to fulfil their roles in school improvement. They carry out 'pop-in' visits to lessons, scrutinise children's work and regularly coach their team to improve. Challenging discussions at year group meetings hold individual teachers and teaching assistants to account for improvement. These leaders are proud of their work to date but they are aware there is more to do to ensure consistently good teaching and achievement.

Staff mobility was high in the summer term. Leaders monitor teaching more intensively than previously and set clear goals for improvement. As a result, some teachers who were underperforming left the school. The new team work cohesively together with clear determination to improve the infant school quickly. Parents trust the executive headteacher's leadership. They told the inspector they are confident the infant school will improve to the same standard as the junior school.

Leaders prioritise securing teaching that is consistently good and better. They have a detailed view of teaching and learning because they now use different strategies to assess its quality. For example, they have increased their use of work scrutiny, observations and talking to children. Monitoring forms also refer to the priorities identified during the inspection. For example, the effectiveness of teaching assistants and how learning meets children's needs and abilities. Most staff use better questioning skills, ongoing assessment and practical resources in lessons so children are now more engaged in learning. Consequently, assessments of each child's performance are more accurate because staff have more information.

Evidence collected from these more frequent checks is used to inform staff training. For example training to develop questioning is helping some staff to confidently use open ended questions. As a result children are talking more and extending their

vocabulary. Some of children's work in books and on display show that they are beginning to make better progress in reading and writing. New nursery children feel very settled and secure in both indoor and outdoor environments. One large group were ably supported by an adult in early writing skills on a large wall chalk board. In a minority of classes, teachers' questioning is closed and unhelpful or the additional adult was insufficiently proactive in helping children develop basic skills.

This inconsistency in teaching effected children's attainment in Key Stage 1 at the end of the summer term. Some teachers' expectations remained too low, so results in end of year tests did not increase. In contrast, teaching in Year 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage was more effective. Intensive support in these year groups enabled staff to quickly reflect upon and improve their practice. As a result there is a significant increase in attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the end of Year 1 phonics screening checks for 2014.

Governors hold leaders to account for their actions to improve the infant school. They understand pupil performance information because they attend training and visit the school for pupil progress meetings. The strategic plan does not give sufficient information about exactly what they have to monitor or when. They acted quickly and strategically to reconstitute the board to give greater clarity to their roles and responsibilities.

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

Following the recent inspection the local authority responded swiftly to provide the school with additional support. Consultancy in the Early Years Foundation Stage contributed to the increase in children's outcomes in 2014. Working alongside the school adviser, middle leaders are developing their skills in observing teaching and scrutinising work. The local authority has carried out several reviews of the school performance. They have an accurate view of the school's overall effectiveness.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Debono

Her Majesty's Inspector