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Jonathan Baker
The Woodlands Community Primary School
Canning Road
Glascote
Tamworth
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Dear Mr Baker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Woodlands Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 January 2015, 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 second 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 are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupil premium funding is used more effectively to accelerate progress for disadvantaged pupils and narrow the gaps in achievement between these pupils and their classmates
- make sure that feedback to teachers following checks on their work, is explicit about what they are doing well and what they must improve.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you as headteacher and with the deputy and assistant headteachers to discuss the action taken since the last

inspection. We made brief visits to classrooms and looked at a sample of pupils' books. We considered a number of documents including information about pupils' achievement and the outcomes of the checks that leaders make on the work of teachers. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the Section 5 inspection, nine teachers, including some part-time staff, have left the school. Six new teachers have been appointed. The deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher have been in post since January 2014. The English and mathematics subject leaders have been in post for less than a term. The governing body has been re-constituted. Five governors have left and one new governor has joined the governing body. A new Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body have been appointed.

Main findings

The rate of improvement since the Section 5 inspection has been too slow. You and other leaders understand that although some improvements have been made in the quality of teaching, particularly in recent months, these have not been sufficient to ensure that all pupils make good progress. You recognise that there is considerable work still to be done in order that the school can be judged as good at the next section 5 inspection.

You have ensured that teachers have had opportunities to work with colleagues within and beyond the school to check that their assessments of the standard of pupils' work are accurate. External checks made by the local authority have also confirmed that assessment judgements are appropriate. This means that leaders are confident that the information they collect each half term about pupils' attainment and progress is accurate.

School information about pupils' progress indicates that in a number of year groups and subjects the proportions of pupils making expected or better than expected progress remain low. Leaders recognise that this is due to the legacy of poor teaching in the past as well as continuing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. However, in other year groups an increasing proportion of pupils are now making at least expected progress as a result of more effective teaching.

The information gathered about the progress of each pupil is analysed and you meet regularly with class teachers to discuss this information and to decide how best to support pupils who need extra help in order to make good progress. You keep helpful records of these meetings which you are beginning to use to ensure that teachers are clear about the agreed actions which must be taken.

Leaders compare the progress of different groups of pupils such as boys and girls and disadvantaged pupils and other pupils. You and the deputy headteacher know that there are classes and subjects where there is little difference between these groups but recognise that in some classes gaps are wide. For example in Year 5, disadvantaged pupils are almost a year behind other pupils in reading.

Disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 have made particularly poor progress in mathematics during Key Stage 2. Leaders have not placed enough focus on tackling these inequalities and checking to see that gaps are narrowing.

On occasions, the conclusions you draw from your analysis of assessment information are over positive. Subject leaders for English and mathematics are new to these responsibilities and you recognise that they need further guidance and experience in using information about pupils' achievement to target their work.

You make regular checks on the quality of teaching by making visits to classrooms and looking at the work and the marking in pupils' books. The records that you keep following these checks show that you are now rightly focusing on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. You give oral and written feedback to teachers which explain what they have done well and what they must do to improve. However, the areas for improvement are sometimes too vague to ensure that teachers are clear about what is expected.

You recognise that when weaknesses in teaching have been identified, leaders have not been effective in checking that the required improvements have been made and are being sustained by all staff. However, you have recently begun to be more specific about how and when leaders will check that the required improvements are being made. This is now starting to drive some improvements for example in the impact of teachers' marking on pupils' progress.

In pupils' books there are some examples of very effective marking where teachers identify errors or misconceptions and ask questions or provide further examples to help pupils move on in their learning. This is not yet consistent in all classes, although improvements can be seen in books since the start of the autumn term 2014.

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 district manager for improvement from the local authority is a regular visitor to the school. She has a clear understanding of the school's current position and provides a good level of challenge to school leaders to hold them to account for their work. The local authority has recently included Woodlands in a school-to-school review project undertaken with HMI in the Tamworth area. The headteacher

engaged well with this project and worked with colleagues in an open and reflective manner. School leaders have acted promptly on some of the recommendations from the review such as raising expectations for the presentation of pupils' work. Leaders are now planning opportunities for teachers to visit another school in the group to learn from and share good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy