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2 March 2015

Mick Murphy
Headteacher
Claregate Primary School
Chester Avenue
Tettenhall
Wolverhampton
WV6 9JU

Dear Mr Murphy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Claregate Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in 29 January 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:

- make sure those senior leaders who have responsibility for improving teaching across the school have the necessary high-quality classroom practice to provide a role model for others
- make sure all staff, particularly those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, follow the school's policies on teaching phonics and listening to children read on a frequent basis.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, five governors, including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including information about pupils' achievement, governance and the

school's work to keep pupils' safe. During this visit you and a representative accompanied me on visits to all classrooms to review work in pupils' books and observe their learning in lessons.

Context

Since my previous visit, three teachers have left the school.

Main findings

You have taken some important actions since my second monitoring visit and have:

- strengthened governance by recruiting new governors and restructuring the governing body
- written a well-considered action plan with clear measurable outcomes
- improved teachers' skills in using information about pupils' achievement in order to provide work which challenges pupils of different abilities
- trained subject leaders of reading, writing and mathematics in how make judgements about teaching and learning based on first-hand evidence
- helped teachers develop the necessary skills to teach all aspects of reading and writing with increasing effectiveness
- made sure that checks carried out on the effectiveness of teachers and leaders are increasingly systematic with the evidence gathered feeding into a better informed assessment of the school's work.

The actions that have been taken since the my previous visit are now helping pupils, particularly the least able and those known to be eligible for free school meals, to make faster progress. Your own school information shows that an increasing proportion of pupils are beginning to make better than expected progress and catch –up with the progress made by their classmates.

The governing body has responded appropriately to the warning notice issued by the local authority in response to the findings of my previous visit. Governors are beginning to have a more detailed oversight of leaders' and teachers' performance, and of pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils. Governors have increased their first-hand involvement in the school. They now participate in learning walks and lesson observations and are increasingly able to hold the headteacher to account. They are less secure in their understanding of the part other senior leaders play in improving teaching and pupils' achievement.

Pupils are beginning to read more widely and more regularly and have increasing access to high-quality children's literature. Reading areas in all classroom visited are now inviting and treated with respect. Teachers are beginning to influence pupils' wider reading choices more carefully. Consequently, pupils are developing reading stamina and a growing love of reading. Actions taken to improve the teaching of early reading are beginning to have an impact. You are rightly aware that some

inconsistencies remain and that there is reluctance on the part of some staff to follow the agreed policy.

Those responsible for leading English and mathematics have made good improvement since my previous visit. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their respective areas of responsibility. You are aware that some senior leaders require intensive external support at both classroom and leadership level in order for them to develop the necessary skills to fulfil their teaching and leadership roles effectively. It is important that this support is accepted, built on and followed up thoroughly and quickly by yourself and governors.

The outcome of this visit will be discussed with the Regional Director and may have an impact on the timing of the next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority officer has a good understanding of the school and provides a good level of challenge to the leadership team. The current high level of support will need to continue if the school is to become good. Quite rightly, the local authority made full use of its statutory powers to secure rapid improvement in governance and in the quality of education provided by the school. The local authority is aware of the remaining weaknesses in some areas of leadership. Its officers are taking appropriate steps in supporting the team through monthly visits to overcome the difficulties quickly.

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

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority