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11 March 2015

Clare Longden
Wallbrook Primary School
Off Bradleys Lane
Coseley
Bilston
WV14 8YP

Dear Mrs Longden

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wallbrook Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Tuesday 10 March 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the temporary deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, a National Leader of Governance currently supporting the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and action plans drawn up by governors, subject leaders and the leader responsible for special educational needs provision were also evaluated. Monitoring records, minutes of governing body meetings and observations during a tour of the school were also taken into consideration.

Context

A temporary deputy headteacher is providing cover for the substantive deputy headteacher's current absence due to ill health. Leaders have considered a different structure to the responsibility posts to build on current strengths within the school and recruit appropriate expertise where necessary.

Main findings

You have lost no time in identifying the necessary actions to take the school forward as quickly as possible. You are accurately aware of the difficulties facing the school but you have avoided turning any known barrier into an excuse for delay. You are suitably ambitious for the school's success and your commitment to pupils' achievement is evident in the priorities you have identified and support you have planned.

You have identified and planned a programme of training for staff and governors so they are able to address the weaknesses identified in the most recent section 5 inspection. You have engaged the help of those who have appropriate expertise, for example, in helping staff to manage some pupils' difficult behaviour. In reducing low-level disruption in lessons, you have been careful to emphasise the importance for pupils of purposeful praise and encouragement.

You have engaged a mathematics consultant to raise staff confidence and improve their mathematical subject knowledge in order to raise standards. In addition, you have planned a programme of support for the subject leaders so they are able to lead their subjects, conduct checks and provide developmental feedback. Your regular observations and checks provide evidence of pupils' increased accuracy in their mental calculation work. You also report that pupils are now more willing to persevere in solving mathematical problems and do not give up when they have to think harder.

Your formal and informal checks on the quality of teaching have provided you with evidence of improvement. Your evaluations have been verified by external consultants. Training and close monitoring has helped staff to increasingly evaluate their own skills and develop a keenness for self-improvement. Your monitoring of teaching and learning takes full account of pupils' recorded progress; the application of agreed initiatives; limitations in pupils' work which impedes their progress; and effective adult deployment. In reaching your judgements you also consider the views of pupils and outcomes of pupil progress meetings. Areas for future development are specific but not all review dates demonstrate the necessary sense of urgency.

You carefully track and record pupils' progress over time. The records show clear evidence that you compare the progress of groups of pupils so that you can identify trends. This information does not lead to specific, planned action to quicken or secure the progress of certain groups, for example, boys and disadvantaged pupils,

particularly in Key Stage 1. As staff have become more skilled, pupils' progress has improved. Where weaknesses persist you have provided or planned further support tailored to individual need. You have used staff meeting times to communicate your expectations of teachers' written feedback for pupils in their books so that staff have an agreed understanding of what is required of them. You have checked to see that the standards are implemented consistently. Where they are not you have challenged and checked for improvements over time.

Your school improvement plan includes all the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 inspection. The planned actions are relevant and supported well by additional plans which are specific to a subject or aspect requiring improvement. Your regular reviews of progress against the improvement plan provide pertinent actions for the near future. The plan does not identify who will evaluate the impact of the planned initiatives or training.

Governors are suitably aware of the school's context and the support provided to improve the school to good. Nevertheless, there is no sense of complacency. Governors have embarked on their own programme of improvement so they can better meet the raised expectations of their role. While all governors are supportive of the school they are developing their ability to engage with school leaders at a more strategic level. A National Leader of Governance is currently working closely with school governors and leaders to develop appropriate governor skills. He has identified the priorities for governor development; established a monitoring programme involving as many governors as possible; and drawn up a governor action plan. These initiatives provide clear direction, substantial support and an opportunity for incremental improvement. The Chair of the Governing Body will begin a leadership development programme with the National College of Teaching and Leadership in April this year.

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 local authority representative has a close and accurate knowledge of the school, its contextual difficulties and leaders' capacity to bring about rapid improvements. The representative knows the improvement strategies employed by the school and keeps track of the impact of training and support initiatives. She is alert to the need for the consistent application of agreed policies across the school and understands where staff lack a focus or appreciation for particular initiatives. She is able to point leaders to appropriate external expertise so that support is correctly targeted to the school's needs. Monitoring visits are suitably regular and informative. The LA representative confirmed improvements in the quality of teaching, teachers' subject knowledge and pupils' engagement in their learning.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Dudley Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway
Her Majesty's Inspector