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6 May 2015

Duncan Cocker
Headteacher
Villiers Primary School
Prouds Lane
Bilston
WV14 6PR

Dear Mr Cocker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Villiers Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 May 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 January 2015. 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 that governors are included in the range of monitoring activities that are set out in the action plan
- ensure that pupils develop breadth and depth of understanding in mathematics by improving the teaching of logic and problem solving.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your senior leaders, two representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection.

The school improvement plan was evaluated, along with other documents relating to attendance, the checks made on the quality of teaching, minutes from governors meetings and information about pupils' progress. We also visited a number of classrooms together to talk to pupils and look at their work.

Context

Since the inspection in January 2015, one teacher has resigned from their post and will leave at the end of May, and a second will leave at the end of the year. One teaching assistant is also leaving at the end of the year. Two newly qualified teachers have been appointed to start in September and you are currently advertising two more teaching positions.

Main findings

There is clear and tangible determination from you and the senior leaders to continue to improve the school as quickly as possible. You work together as a strong, cohesive unit and have a shared vision of how to ensure that the school becomes at least good as quickly as possible. Since the school was removed from special measures in January you have maintained an appropriate sense of urgency in your improvement work and are tackling the areas for improvement head on.

Your action plan provides clear direction and precise timescales for your improvement activities. It includes some measureable and appropriate milestones for checking if actions have been successful. It is correctly focussed on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and clearly states who will be responsible for checking that actions have been taken and have had an impact on improving pupils' progress. Governors are not yet included in these checking activities.

The assistant headteachers have clearly defined roles. They are proactive and conscientious and are knowledgeable about the year groups for which they are responsible. They make frequent checks on the quality of teaching and provide staff with helpful advice on what needs to improve further. Their work has a positive impact because they provide deadlines by which improvements must be made and then go back quickly to check their advice has been followed.

You have an accurate and thorough view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, you have made strategic decisions to place senior leaders with expertise in mathematics and English in the year groups where the least progress has been made in these subjects.

In addition you are targeting staff training specifically at areas of weakness. For example, in order to help teachers to make accurate judgements about the quality of pupils' writing you have developed a set of reference materials to show different levels of writing. During this process you identified that pupils' use of punctuation needs improvement and have commissioned training for staff on this area of writing.

The quality of teaching continues to improve. This is because you have high expectations of all staff and quickly provide individual coaching and support where it is necessary. You are effectively sharing the good practice that exists within the school.

The quality of planning is becoming more consistent across the school. This is as a result of the new planning format which provides teachers with clear guidance about what to include in each lesson. Expectations about providing work of different levels of difficulty are explicit. Monitoring records show that this has led to improvements in the quality of planning and to the level of challenge provided for pupils in many classrooms.

Marking continues to improve. This is because frequent checks are made on the quality of marking in teachers' books and any poor practice is addressed quickly. The policy has recently been adapted and now provides teachers with clearer guidance on how to mark mathematics books to improve the progress that pupils can make.

The leadership skills of the teachers with responsibilities for subjects are improving. They have recently prepared action plans for their areas of responsibility and have presented these to governors. They are in the early stages of monitoring the quality of teaching in their subject areas.

School tracking information shows that the proportion of pupils on track to meet the standard required in the Year 1 phonics check has increased compared with 2014 and is likely remain above the national average. This is as a result of continued improvements the teaching of phonics. Equally, pupils in Year 2 are on track to perform better in reading, writing and mathematics than their classmates last year, particularly at the higher Level 3. Improvements are also evident in Year 6. Almost all pupils are on track to make the expected progress in reading and writing with an above average proportion making more progress than is expected. However, mathematics remains the weaker area with only small improvements being made from last year.

You are aware that the improvement in mathematics is slower than that seen in reading and writing. In order to help pupils to make better progress you have organised training for staff in the use of practical equipment to support learning. You have audited and centralised these resources to make them more accessible.

In addition you have planned a day of training to help teachers to understand the requirements of the new mathematics curriculum for pupils to have a breadth and depth in their mathematical knowledge. Parents have attended workshops in school to better understand how mathematics is taught.

Attendance is improving and, so far this year, is in line with the national average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. As a result of the installation of a new signing in system and a focus on punctuality, the number of times pupils are late for school has reduced dramatically.

As a result of the reorganisation of resources and rooms, increased space has been made available for teaching. This enables classes to be split into small groups for more targeted teaching. You anticipate that this will help pupils to make better progress.

Governors are committed to improving the school and continue to have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are knowledgeable about the actions being taken to make improvements. They undertake monitoring visits to the school however these are not yet included on, or specifically linked to, the action plan. Governors are beginning to receive more precise information about the impact of the pupil premium funding on pupils' progress.

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 is providing a good level of support. The advisor is knowledgeable about the school and makes regular and helpful visits. He has validated the senior leaders' judgements of teaching and is providing the headteacher with an external view of the improvements being made. The reports he provides are helpful and accurate.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
cc. Local authority