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14 September 2015

Ms Clare Cranham
Kensington Avenue Primary School
Kensington Avenue
Thornton Heath
Surrey
CR7 8BT

Dear Ms Cranham

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kensington Avenue Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 September 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 February 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school. The school should take immediate action to:

- sharpen development planning to make sure that improvement activities have ambitious timescales and clear measures of success in order to evaluate the progress made
- develop systematic monitoring and evaluation procedures so that all leaders check the impact of the school's work on securing rapid and lasting improvements where they are needed
- make sure that expectations of pupils' behaviour are consistently high
- ensure the governing body is fully recruited and trained as a matter of urgency so that it can review, challenge and support the school to improve.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and senior leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with leaders responsible for English and mathematics, as well as the phase leaders of the early years provision and Key Stages 1 and 2. I held discussions with pupils from Key Stage 2. I met with the national leader of governance who is the new Chair of the Governing Body and also a representative from the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I examined the single central record of recruitment checks. You and the deputy headteacher accompanied me during short visits to classes. We observed teaching from Nursery to Year 6 and in the special resource unit. I spoke to pupils and staff and looked at pupils' work. I also considered the school's development plans, the review of the use of the pupil premium and the review of governance.

Context

Since the last inspection seven teachers and two teaching assistants have left the school. Eight teachers and two teaching assistants have joined the school. The school business manager left the school at the end of the spring term and was replaced by a new business manager at the start of the summer term. One member of the senior leadership team is on long term sick leave. Two members of the governing body have resigned including the former chair, leaving the governing body under recruited by five members.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have made insufficient progress in tackling the recommendations for improvement from the previous inspection. Leaders have restructured the senior and middle leadership teams and reviewed the curriculum in preparation for the new assessment requirements. Apart from this, they have been slow in driving other improvements across the school. Much remains to be done. The issues that need to be improved are the same as those identified during the inspection in February 2015. The school's development plan is not effective in driving improvement. Initiatives to secure better teaching have not been put in place quickly enough. Expectations of pupils' behaviour are not consistent and monitoring and evaluation lack rigour. Members of the governing body have not held the school's leaders sufficiently to account to help improve the school quickly.

The quality of teaching remains uneven. Leaders have not followed up initiatives rigorously, such as the drive to improve pupils' handwriting, to make sure that all staff implement new approaches consistently. The new 'teaching and learning handbook' introduced this term is too new to show any impact on raising standards. The school has limited information about pupils' achievement because procedures to check the progress pupils make throughout the school are still not robust and systematic. Assessment information available during my visit was not analysed effectively to compare the performance of all groups of pupils at the school,

including those eligible for the pupil premium funding. Although leaders have introduced 'mild, hot and spicy' levels of difficulty to tasks, expectations are not always high enough. Some pupils told me that they find the work too easy. As a consequence, pupils' achievement has not improved overall. This can be seen, for example, in provisional outcomes for Year 6 in the most recent national assessments. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics were lower than the school achieved in 2014 and were also below the national averages for that year.

The 'behaviour ladder' record of pupils' attitudes in each class is helping in a general way to encourage pupils to conduct themselves sensibly in lessons. The school now maintains a record of any incidents of poor behaviour that occur. However, leaders are not using the information gathered in a focused way to make sure the highest standards are maintained. Older pupils told me that there are fewer issues at break times but incidences of boisterous and rude behaviour continue. Leaders have not made sure that teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are consistently high. This is seen, for example, when staff praise pupils for behaviour that is not praise worthy, fail to challenge pupils who do not follow instructions or allow them to treat the school's resources carelessly. As a result, improvements to pupils' attitudes and behaviour are fragile.

The single central record meets requirements and staff have received recent and relevant training to help make sure that all staff are familiar the school's safeguarding systems and procedures. This has included training on the strategy to prevent radicalisation and raising awareness of pupils at risk from female genital mutilation.

The current school development plan is in place from September 2015. It reflects all the key priorities from the last inspection. However, the proposed actions are not always clear and specific. The criteria for judging the impact of actions sometimes concentrate more on the introduction of initiatives than on measuring their impact on better outcomes for pupils. Timescales do not consistently reflect a strong sense of urgency. The school needs to assess and check the progress it makes in addressing the issues outlined in the inspection with greater rigour and determination.

The extent to which middle leaders take responsibility for securing improvements in their areas of responsibility is variable. Detailed success criteria and better feedback to pupils in literacy are helping pupils to understand more clearly what key skills they need to learn and how to improve their work. Leaders have not made sure that these approaches are used consistently across other curriculum subjects, particularly in mathematics.

The review of the use of the pupil premium funding was conducted in April 2015. Leaders have not been effective in using the findings to develop the way the additional funding is used.

The governing body has not supported the school in driving rapid improvements. The review of governance was conducted in July 2015 which was not soon enough after the inspection. As a result, governors have not taken effective steps to develop their skills in holding school leaders to account. They have not made sure that the school has an effective development plan or kept a careful enough check on the actions the school is taking.

I will conduct a further monitoring visit during the spring term 2015 to evaluate the progress made by the school.

External support

The impact of the support the school has received thus far has been limited. Relationships between the school and the local authority are weak. The school has not focused on drawing upon the full extent of support available from the local authority. In turn, the local authority has not been effective in establishing a clear partnership with the school in order to help it to improve quickly.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Gerard".

Madeleine Gerard
Her Majesty's Inspector