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13 January 2014

Mrs Cate Speight
Headteacher
Cowlersley Primary School
Main Avenue
Cowlersley
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
HD4 5US

Dear Mrs Speight

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cowlersley Primary School, Kirklees

Following my visit to your school on 10 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in . 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 the information given to governors better reflects the progress pupils are making over a longer period of time so that overall progress is clearly understood and drives school improvement priorities
- ensure a greater focus on specific areas of classroom practice that help teachers and staff improve the learning of pupils.

Evidence

During my visit, I had conversations with you and other senior leaders, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority. The schools' plan for improvement was evaluated. A brief visit to all classrooms in the school was undertaken. I reviewed minutes of staff meetings and notes from meetings held with pupils.

Main Findings

You and your team have made an effective start to getting your school to good. This is because you, your senior leaders and staff have responded very positively to the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. You have taken prompt action to start to address them and have a clear plan to move forward.

Actions to improve teaching have been prioritised. You and your senior leaders have started to establish an understanding with staff and governors of what is needed to do to get to good and beyond. This is because the leadership team has worked well together in formulating and carrying out a number of improvements since the recent inspection. These include the work you have undertaken to review handwriting and presentation, marking and literacy policies with all staff. You have followed this up with looking at how this is helping pupils in their lessons by scrutinising their work and watching teachers in lessons. You have had a particular focus on more able pupils. Pupils have also been asked about what could make reading better in the school. This has led to a review of how guided reading sessions are carried out in the classrooms and informed teachers' planning.

You have established a new network of external support with the help of the local authority. This network includes working alongside highly successful schools and sharing ideas that will help to improve your own school. The partnership working has a focus on improving teaching and learning. Detailed plans on how this will be achieved have yet to be fully formulated.

Your plans for improving the school are appropriate and challenging. This is because they focus clearly on those areas identified in the recent inspection report and build on those areas that were already under development before the last inspection. The plans have been developed with senior leaders in school and is shared and understood by all staff and governors. It is clear and realistic with set time scales for completion of actions and some key short term milestones identified to help monitor the effectiveness of the actions taken. Governors have a defined responsibility for checking the progress being made within the plan. Some planned actions need further refinement, especially those relating to getting teaching to good or better. The plan has a clear focus on monitoring teaching but not enough detail on how aspects of teaching in classrooms will be improved. An audit of skills undertaken by support staff has identified aspects for further development.

The governing body have a clear and developing understanding of what the school needs to do to get good. This is because governors are knowledgeable about the actions being undertaken by you and the senior leaders and are determined to develop a better understanding about the challenges the school faces. Since the inspection a new committee arrangement is in place that provides a sharper focus on the areas for improvement. Meetings have taken place to review plans for improvement and establish an aligned timeline of meetings that fit in with monitoring activities in school. This will help governors have timely conversations and raise issues promptly where needed. The enhanced pupil tracking information now shared with governors will enable them to check that the plan is on course. Some additional information about how well groups of pupils are progressing across a key stage would provide governors with a clearer picture about how well pupils are doing in the longer term.

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

Effective support for the school which is proportionate and appropriate has been provided by the local authority since the recent inspection. This is because the Transformation and Quality Improvement Officer (TQIO), who visits the school regularly to review progress and provide guidance has helped establish a focussed network of support through local schools and Local Leaders in Education. She has worked with you and your senior leaders to contribute to the planning for improvement. The level of this support is planned to be maintained over the coming year alongside half termly monitoring visits

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown

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