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Alan Harding
Headteacher
Birch Hill Primary School
Leppington
Bracknell
RG12 7WW

Dear Mr Harding

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Birch Hill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 2013. 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated a range of documentation including the school improvement plan and information relating to the monitoring of teaching. You took me on a tour of the school and we made brief visits to all classes where I spoke to pupils about their work and looked at their books.

Main findings

While you were disappointed by the judgements made at the last inspection, you have used its findings to support and further develop improvement work you were already undertaking.

You have rightly focused on providing more challenge for all pupils, including the more able in mathematics. Teachers are specifically incorporating this challenge into their planning. Evidence of this challenge can be seen in pupils' books, in teachers' marking and in the communication between teachers and pupils. Additional teachers have also been deployed to support small groups of more able pupils. This means that these pupils are being stretched with more difficult work in order to give them the opportunity to achieve higher levels. Core mathematical skills are being taught explicitly and as a result pupils' basic mathematical skills are improving. Assessment information shows that pupils are making improved progress.

You recognise the need for pupils to feel comfortable in making mistakes and learning from them in order to build confidence and resilience. Pupils are developing the skills that enable them to reflect and talk articulately about what they have learned, what they find difficult, what they need to do to improve and what their targets should be for the future.

There has been useful training to develop teachers' questioning skills. There are teachers with good questioning skills but this good and outstanding practice is not being fully shared to the benefit of all staff.

You have set clear expectations for the marking of pupils' work. Pupils' work shows that they are frequently given detailed guidance on how to improve their work. Opportunities for pupils to respond to this marking are less frequent. Effective feedback is also being given to pupils verbally by teachers and other adults and as a result pupils talk maturely about their learning.

The use of assessment information has been sharpened and you are checking this information to see if the extra support and help you are giving pupils is making a difference to the progress they are making. The mathematics and literacy subject teams are focussing more closely on the progress pupils make over time in their areas in order to identify where pupils are underachieving.

Since the last inspection, governors have had useful training which is enabling them to use and interpret assessment information more effectively. As a result, governors are able to ask more informed and challenging questions about the school's 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 has provided valuable support to the school in the last three years. Since the last inspection, advisers have given school leaders useful guidance relating to the refinement of the school's improvement plan and the use of assessment information relating to pupils' progress. Subject advisers have provided effective training to develop teaching skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Lisa Moore

Her Majesty's Inspector