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3 October 2014

David Wareham
Headteacher
New City Primary School
New City Road
London
E13 9PY

Dear Mr Wareham

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to New City Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 October 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 April 2014. 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 maintain their challenge of leaders during, and following, the reconstitution of the governing body
- make sure that leaders check frequently that recently implemented changes are being applied consistently throughout the school.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, members of the mathematics team, a group of teachers, two members of the governing body, pupils and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since

the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. You gave me a tour of the school and we looked at a sample of pupils' work in their books.

Context

Five teachers are new to the school this academic year and there have been some changes to the senior leadership team. Of the three new assistant headteachers, one was internally promoted, one is covering a maternity absence and the other is new to the school. The deputy head is also new to her role, having previously been an assistant headteacher at the school. The governing body is currently reconstituting. Building work is due to start on the school site imminently. This will provide additional rooms to accommodate the planned expansion of the school roll. It is due to be completed by September 2015.

Main findings

Leaders and teachers share a determination to improve outcomes for pupils at the school. The school's plan outlines clearly the actions leaders intend to take as well as the impact they are expecting. The actions are detailed and address the issues highlighted in the last inspection report. However, further detail should be added to clarify how leaders and governors will check the impact of actions. The plan links to detailed targets for pupils' progress. These are helpfully broken down, term by term, so that leaders can check that progress over the year is being made rapidly enough.

Leaders have refined the way in which they make judgements about the quality of teaching. They now take into account a wider range of information. They consider the numerical information about pupils' progress and the work in pupils' books in addition to what they observe during lessons. This is leading to a more reliable understanding of each teacher's performance. As a result, leaders now adopt a proportionate and tailored approach to staff training and the provision of support.

Teachers report that training is now more focussed and of higher quality. They speak highly of the support they receive from their team leaders. They are aware that expectations of their performance have been raised; they are clear about leaders' approach to checking the quality of their teaching. The progress of disadvantaged and more able pupils now has a higher profile among teachers and leaders. Leaders identify the needs of both groups of pupils at an earlier stage and intervene earlier to meet their needs.

Training has been provided for all staff to improve the quality of their teaching of mathematics. As a result, teachers are now paying more attention to pupils' understanding of concepts as well as noting their ability to complete tasks. Additional resources have been purchased to support pupils' development of conceptual understanding and these are beginning to be used throughout the

school. Leaders have introduced a new system to track pupils' progress in mathematics. Teachers now identify pupils' needs more accurately, making sure that gaps in their knowledge and understanding are addressed more promptly. Teachers and their assistants lead a greater number of small groups which help pupils to catch up if they have fallen behind. The mathematics leader works closely with teachers new to the school to make sure that they quickly become familiar with the school's expectations. The mathematics team comprises four teachers who provide effective support for the mathematics leader. They play a significant role in raising the profile of mathematics and in improving teachers' practice.

Expectations of the quality of teachers' marking have been raised. Pupils are now set additional activities that may address a misconception, allow them to practise a particular skill or provide the teacher with further information about the depth of their understanding. Although there is evidence in pupils' books of this having a positive impact there is some inconsistency in practice throughout the school.

The governing body is currently in the process of reconstituting. The previous Chair of the Governing body has resigned and the Vice-Chair's term of office is now coming to an end. Having carried out an audit of governors' skills, the committee leading the reconstitution process is well placed to ensure that the new governing body has the necessary expertise to carry out its role effectively. Governors have now undertaken training enabling them to interpret information about pupils' progress more effectively. As a result they have begun to challenge leaders about the performance of pupils in greater detail. Meetings of the governing body are now held twice termly, ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for governors to develop their skills as well as to check on pupils' progress. There is an increased expectation of the time governors are expected to commit to their role. In addition to attending meetings, they are expected to visit the school so that they can check on the progress it is making, first hand.

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

A local authority officer has worked alongside senior leaders, confirming that judgements they make about the quality of teaching are accurate.

A 'progress board' led by a local authority officer meets regularly to check on the rate of the school's progress. It comprises school leaders, local authority officers and governors. Discussions focus on successes as well as identifying where further support is required. There are plans in place for local authority officers to carry out a comprehensive review of the school's performance.

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

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Loukes

Her Majesty's Inspector