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12 April 2013

Mrs Andrea Poole
Headteacher
Mab's Cross Primary School
Standishgate
Wigan
Lancashire
WN1 1XL

Dear Mrs Poole

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Mab's Cross Primary School, Wigan.

Following my visit to your school on 11 April 2013, 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and the chair of the curriculum committee. HMI also held a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated.

Context

Two teachers are on maternity leave; their classes are being taught by temporary staff, including one newly qualified teacher.

Main findings

Leaders and managers, including governors, and staff have accepted the findings from the inspection in February. They were prompt to compile an action plan to supplement the areas for improvement that were already in the school development

plan. The action plan acknowledges the interlinking nature of the areas for improvement and gives a clear, staged programme of actions and monitoring procedures. Some of the success criteria are too general to enable sharp evaluation of the effectiveness of action taken.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a strong sense of purpose. The recent 'vision and values' day, attended by staff and governors, set the tone regarding higher expectations and urgency for action. Anecdotal evidence indicates morale is good and all staff are enthusiastic and committed to making Mab's Cross 'a good school'.

The decision for a few governors to act as a School Improvement Committee is a useful step in heightening governors' role in robustly holding the school to account. The Chair of the Governing Body is also aware of the need to review current practice and to widen the ways in which all governors can be involved in gathering information and questioning how well the school is doing.

The headteacher is looking at ways to minimise disruption and to ensure a smooth start to the autumn term given new buildings, changes in staffing and an increase in the number of pupils on roll. This is balanced by current and planned action to heighten staff's awareness of effective teaching and learning through training, coaching and visits to other schools. Key stage leaders are expected to take an increasingly visible role in steering professional development, tracking pupils' progress and identifying the next steps.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- sharpen the success criteria in the action plan to give clearer expectations of the impact of action in the short term and longer term
- specify the expectations of senior and middle managers regarding their role in monitoring the implementation of, and reporting on, the effectiveness of action being taken
- establish protocols and guidance for governors in monitoring and evaluating the school's improvement
- agree 'non-negotiables' in relation to the quality of teaching and learning.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has given guidance in the compilation of the action plan and brokered support in leadership and management, drawing on the expertise of a National Leader in Education. It is also supplying funding to enable the sharing of effective classroom practice and training. The school has arranged for external consultants to provide professional development sessions, such as those planned for June onwards to develop consistency in the delivery of guided reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- The lead inspector