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11 September 2014

Paul Appleton
Cherry Tree Hill Primary School
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Dear Mr Appleton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cherry Tree Hill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report my 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement in January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are now taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- complete a thorough evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and then use this to produce a much sharper and more relevant improvement plan
- ensure that the re-constituted governing body is fully up to strength with all key roles filled by January 2015
- ensure that effective mentoring and support programmes for the interim headteacher, preferably involving a link to an outstanding school head, are quickly put in place.

Evidence

During my visit, I met with you, three members of the governing body, the senior leadership team and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since my last visit. The school improvement plan and quality assurance plans were evaluated. I also toured the school with you to look at learning taking place.

Context

Since my previous visit, the former headteacher has retired and the deputy head has been appointed as interim headteacher. A significant number of governors reached the end of their terms of office and new elections, appointments and co-options were agreed shortly before my visit. The governing body was also re-constituted in accordance with 2015 requirements at the same time. The school has appointed four newly qualified teachers.

Significant building and alteration work, which was under way at the time of my last visit has now been completed and the physical divisions between the former primary and infant schools have been removed.

Main findings

The Key Stage 2 results in 2014 were much improved on previous years. This was brought about by a concerted effort on the part of all the teachers and staff involved, in response to the January inspection judgements.

Although my visit was conducted on only the third day of the school term, the interim headteacher has already made an impact. As the former deputy head, he knows the school well and is trusted by staff. Senior leaders felt that there was much greater clarity and accountability in their roles. They feel energised and enthusiastic to take on the challenges of the coming year. The school marking and behaviour policies have been clarified and reaffirmed and are now being consistently applied by all teachers across the whole school. Some small differences in policy, custom and practice between the former infant site and junior site have been removed.

Until the departure of the former headteacher, however, leaders have been reticent in implementing significant change. It is therefore far too early to be able to evaluate the impact of changes such as the revised marking and behaviour policies. Equally, the school's self-evaluation has not been updated, and reflects the school shortly after the January 2014 inspection. There are appropriate procedures in place to check on the quality of the school's work and the progress of children is carefully monitored.

The governing body is quickly re-establishing itself following a brief period where the terms of office of the majority of governors had expired. There are now a good

group of experienced and able governors, but key roles including the chair have yet to be formally filled. Governors expect to begin the process of making a permanent headteacher appointment in January.

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 appointed a new school improvement officer. She is in the process of arranging for an experienced headteacher to partner with the school and support the interim headteacher as he takes on the role. The local authority has also used its appointments to the governing body to add expertise and experience.

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

Yours sincerely

John Peckham
Her Majesty's Inspector