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Mrs Langdon
Acting Headteacher
Grove Road Primary School
Grove Road
Tring
HP23 5PD

Dear Mrs Langdon

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Grove Road Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 May 2012, and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils, the governors, the headteacher designate and the representative from the local authority who spoke with me during the inspection.

There have been several contextual changes since the last inspection. The headteacher, the assistant headteacher and a part-time teacher have left the school. The local authority secured the services of an experienced acting headteacher who will be in post until September 2012. A substantive headteacher has been appointed and will take up her position in September 2012. A full-time teacher has been appointed to fill the teaching commitment previously held by the assistant headteacher. The deputy headteacher, who was non-teaching at the previous inspection, now teaches for two days a week.

As a result of the inspection on 18 October 2011, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Pupils' attainment remains above average in English and mathematics. Progress is beginning to rise throughout the school as a result of improved teaching in most classes. Information about pupils' progress is being used by all teachers and leaders much more effectively to identify where pupils are in danger of falling behind. As a result, pupils who have not made the progress they are capable of are identified more quickly, and lessons and interventions are being adapted more successfully.

The school has increasingly effective systems for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Most senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and remaining areas of weakness. Middle leadership is becoming more effective. Literacy and numeracy leaders are developing a much better understanding of their role. These leaders are exceptionally enthusiastic about the increasing responsibility they have to develop their subjects. They say that the very clear guidance, challenge and support they receive from the acting headteacher and local authority consultants means that they are becoming much more confident in their role and more able to challenge underperformance where it exists. Leaders at all levels are increasingly confident about making links between the outcomes for pupils and the quality of teaching. As a consequence of successful monitoring, areas for development have been identified and useful guidance has been given to teachers. Monitoring is much more focused on remaining inconsistencies and, as a consequence, teaching is improving.

Action plans are much more robust and focused on a clear evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. There is little doubt that almost the whole school community is committed to working towards common goals. Teachers are enthusiastic and exceptionally positive about their professional development so far. Many talk about their commitment to improving further. Senior leaders are accurate in their evaluation of teaching and learning. They recognise where there is work still to be done and where improvements in the quality of teaching have been slower. Their robust plans, along with the commitment of most staff and governors, mean they are in a strong position to continue to accelerate the improvements already seen. While leadership is generally developing very well, the role of deputy headteacher remains underdeveloped. Currently this role is not having a significant enough impact on the school's improvement agenda. The acting headteacher and headteacher designate have a good working relationship. Their mutual respect and understanding mean that important decisions are made collaboratively to minimise any disruption when the headteacher designate takes up her post in September.

As a result of the improving impact of leadership, the quality of teaching is beginning to improve. Time is used more appropriately, with less time wasted. Teachers have increasingly high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They acknowledge that the school serves a higher than average number of able pupils. Teachers are excited about the opportunities they have to improve their practice. Middle leaders have an increasingly accurate view of individual teachers' areas for development, particularly in numeracy. Teachers and leaders can point to striking examples in pupils' work of where targeted professional development has raised expectations and improved the quality of work produced. As a result, rates of progress are beginning to accelerate. Examples of improvements include the quality of marking that pupils receive. The school has a much more explicitly stated policy for marking and feedback. As a result, the practice seen in classes is becoming more consistent and useful. Where less successful examples are found, middle leaders are able to identify why this is the case and show how these skills are continuing to develop.

The support of the local authority has been very well received. It has produced a suitable statement of action, facilitated the appointment of the acting headteacher and provided support for the middle leaders in developing in their roles and delivering their ambitious actions plans for improvements. Many staff are very enthusiastic about how they have been supported by local authority consultants. The local authority is committed to continuing to work with the school in providing challenge and support where underperformance remains.

The governing body is proving very robust in holding leaders to account. Its members are working hard to gain the full trust and support of parents and carers by communicating openly about the progress made and the work still to do. Their commitment and steadfast determination are impressive and they use their professional skills to good effect in challenging and supporting leadership.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2011

- Accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics, so that they reach the highest standards, by:
 - raising expectations of what the pupils can achieve
 - making full use of assessment information about what pupils already know and are able to do, to ensure that the more-able pupils are consistently enthused and challenged
 - using time more purposefully and productively in lessons
 - improving marking so that it clearly identifies how the pupils can improve their work.

- Improve the rigour and purpose of the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that all activities have a sharp focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress
 - ensuring the information collected is used to full effect to improve teaching and learning to better inform improvement planning.

- Establish a strategy to drive improvement and reach ambitious targets that includes:
 - priorities that are based on a thorough and robust evaluation of the school's performance
 - a well-focused improvement plan with clear targets, demanding timescales, and precise criteria against which success can be measured
 - all staff working towards common goals
 - explicit responsibilities for implementation, monitoring progress towards the targets, and evaluating the impact of each priority.