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26 November 2012

Mr Barry Hawes  
Headteacher  
Alton Park Junior School  
Alton Park Road  
Clacton-on-Sea  
CO15 1DL

Dear Mr Hawes

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Alton Park Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 23 November 2012, 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. Please pass on my thanks to the local authority representative and the staff, parents and governors who helped me during the inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, year leaders, the mathematics subject leader and the special educational needs coordinator. Additional meetings were held with the Governing Body, a group of parents and a representative of the local authority. Checks were made on the school's systems for monitoring pupil and staff performance and the school's action plan was evaluated.

**Context**

There have been no significant contextual changes in the school since the inspection in September 2012. However, the school is now consulting parents and carers about a proposal to convert to an academy.

## **Main findings**

The school has responded promptly to the judgement that it requires improvement. Parents and carers, staff and governors all speak highly of the transforming effect of the headteacher's strong leadership. He has galvanised the leadership team. Senior leaders have created a comprehensive plan to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the school's inspection report. The well-designed plan shows very clearly the changes that are planned, when they will happen, and the degree of improvement expected. Each area for improvement has been allocated to a named senior leader who is accountable to the headteacher and the governing body for making sure the improvements occur. Good procedures are in place for reviewing the impact of the changes. These include lesson observations, regular checks of pupils' work, parent and pupil questionnaires and interviews, and reviews by outside bodies, such as the local authority. Targets have been set for each term for the quality of teaching and the progress being made by pupils.

Year heads are working with their teams to make sure that lessons provide work at the right level for each pupil. Their regular checks make sure that teachers mark pupils work according to the school policy, so that pupils know how to improve their work. Regular reviews of each pupil's progress mean that extra support is rapidly given to pupils who are falling behind. The subject leaders are working with colleagues to identify ways of making lessons more exciting and effective.

The governing body is becoming better equipped to hold the school to account. It receives regular updates on the progress of pupils, the quality of teaching and the actions taken to improve the school. Governors are now more closely involved in monitoring the work of the school, each taking responsibility for an area for improvement in the school's action plan. At this stage, governors are still developing their skills in asking the difficult questions that challenge senior leaders. Further training is planned for governors.

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, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- strengthen the governing body by:
  - commissioning an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved
  - developing a strategy to ensure that there are always governors ready to take over key roles on the governing body.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. I will attend the meeting of the governing body on 18 June 2012 to observe its work and provide guidance on interpreting data.

**External support**

The school is working closely with the local authority, whose consultants make regular visits to the school to help strengthen teaching. The local authority is providing training for the governing body and will review its effectiveness early next year. Links with other schools are well developed. These include visits to successful schools to observe good practice and support from advanced skills teachers. The school is developing a partnership with an outstanding primary school that may lead to academy status. Liaison with the neighbouring infant school is growing and you and its headteacher serve on each other's governing bodies.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott

**Her Majesty's Inspector**