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Mrs J Ault
Headteacher
Great Harwood Primary School
Rushton Street
Great Harwood
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB6 7JQ

Dear Mrs Ault

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Great Harwood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 December 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.

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

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, four senior leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Minutes from governing body meetings were considered as were the school's monitoring records. The inspector was taken on a tour of the school to meet staff and pupils.

Context

One member of staff is on long term absence.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors are united in their determination to become a good school. The headteacher's strong leadership and ambitious vision is providing a very clear steer towards improvement. The school is moving at a considerable pace to tackle the shortcomings identified in the inspection report. This is because the school development plan is sharply focused on the most important priorities and it is a useful document to help governors check on the school's progress.

Teaching is improving because of effective whole-school training which is underpinned by a renewed understanding of the features of good teaching and learning. Appropriate action is in place to support teachers who need extra help to improve. Regular checks on teaching lead to precise feedback so teachers are crystal clear about what they need to do next to improve.

Stronger support for pupils who have gaps in their learning plus one-to-one discussions with pupils about their learning goals means that some pupils are beginning to catch-up. Staff responsibilities have been reviewed so that middle leaders now have a greater role in checking on the work of the school.

Improving the work of governors is identified in the school development plan and some training is been planned for the spring term. Nonetheless, the actions to improve governance are not precise enough and the criteria to measure success do not give a clear enough picture of how governance will look when it is good. Members of the governing body are eager to improve their role as critical partners. They recognise they would benefit from an external review of the governing body so they have a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

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 recommends that further action is taken to:

- review the plans for improving governance so that there is greater detail about the actions being taken to improve the effectiveness of the governing body and the measures for success are explicit
- use the support of the local authority to commission an external review of the governing body to help governors identify their strengths and weaknesses and plan training accordingly to improve their effectiveness.

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

External support

The school is making very good use of the effective external support provided by the local authority. A termly meeting of senior leaders, governors and local authority officers is a useful vehicle to help the local authority monitor the school's progress and ensure support is swift and tailored to the school's needs. Local authority officers have supported the school well in developing teaching and learning, improving middle leadership and helping senior leaders monitor progress against the action plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector