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Mrs K Mellor and Ms L Jones
Newlands Primary School
Ullswater Road
Southampton
SO16 9EA

Dear Mrs Mellor and Ms Jones

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

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the newly appointed headteacher and other senior leaders, representatives of the Governing Body, a group of teachers and a representative of the local authority. The school's action plan was evaluated and the inspector looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work.

Context

Significant changes have occurred since the inspection. The school moved to new premises in November. The governing body has been reviewed and reconstituted, some governors have left and new appointments have been made. A newly appointed headteacher will take-up her post in January 2013. Additional teachers have been employed on a temporary basis to support pupils' progress in Year 6.

Main findings

Senior leaders and the local authority have taken decisive action since the inspection. The new headteacher, acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have worked together effectively since the inspection to write an action plan that is focused firmly on raising pupils outcomes further. It is supplemented well by separate plans for improving pupils writing opportunities and skills, and improving the quality of teaching and assessment in all age groups. The specific details of how progress will be measured, the timescales and who will monitor progress are not embedded in the overall school action plan.

Leaders have increased the sense of urgency with which new initiatives have been implemented and monitored across the school. The schools professional training programme has been adapted swiftly to cover the areas for improvement identified at the inspection. As a result changes started prior to the inspection have been strengthened further. For example, staff have had good opportunities to review, discuss and agree a consistent approach to the development of pupils writing. Pupils writing targets are now kept in their books as continuous reminders of their next steps in learning. Teachers are starting to use them to mark and comment on pupils' progress. The programme of peer mentoring and coaching is already starting to identify and share good practice more effectively. The school is focused well on more consistency in sharing learning objectives and success criteria and checking progress during lessons.

Leaders have introduced swiftly the frequent assessment and tracking of pupils' progress including staff being held to account through a pupil progress meeting held every six weeks. Teachers recognise this is helping them to identify any pupils identified as falling below the expected progress, particularly for pupils identified with special educational needs. This is leading to activities that are better matched to the leaning needs of individual pupils and earlier intervention to ensure they catch-up quickly.

School leaders, the local authority and the construction company held discussions related to the development of the outdoor environment for the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result this building phase has been brought forward. Currently staff from the Early Years Foundation Stage are making effective use of the small outdoor areas around the school to ensure pupils have opportunities to develop their physical skills.

A full review of governance has taken place since the inspection. This has included reconstituting the way the governing body works, new appointments and a review of roles and responsibilities. Local authority officers are providing a programme of training activities to introduce new ways of working, including how to ask challenging questions of leaders to hold them to account for the schools work. This is starting to impact positively with governors making more visits to the school and classrooms, part the new chair, to gain a better understanding of the schools work.

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:

- ensure that senior leaders, governors and local authority officers have discussed the anticipated timescale for the school to become good to help focus improvement activities further
- include the specific details of monitoring and evaluation activities, timescales and milestones in the overall school action plan to check that the school is making the anticipated progress and holding all stakeholders to account for implementation of the plan
- ensure that the planned action plan for the governing body is produced and evaluated.

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

External support

The local authority has provided effective support which started prior to the inspection. Support has been particularly good for the development of the roles and responsibilities of the governing body including training on the use of assessment data. Officers have supported leaders in the production of the action plan. They have committed to continue the support for the development of governor skills in asking challenging questions of school leaders and for the induction of the new headteacher. Leaders have effective links with other local schools that helps them to moderate the quality of their own work.

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

Yours sincerely

Judith Rundle
Her Majesty's Inspector