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20 November 2012

Ms Claire Edwards
Headteacher
Powers Hall Infant School
Spa Road
Witham
CM8 1NA

Dear Ms Edwards

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Powers Hall Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 19 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.

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, deputy headteacher, representatives of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, a group of parents, three groups of pupils and teaching staff. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated prior to the inspection visit. The headteacher and phase leaders' monitoring of teaching and few examples of teachers' marking were scrutinised.

Context

There have been no changes since the school was inspected in September 2012.

Main findings

The action plan lists exactly what the school will do to improve. However, the plan and end of term targets have yet to be shared with all staff, although this is

scheduled to take place in the near future. Since the inspection the headteacher, deputy headteacher and phase leaders have monitored teaching, feedback is clear and helpful. There is emerging evidence that teachers are changing their approach and that teaching is improving. The headteacher has met with all teachers to discuss the progress pupils have made since the start of term. Results in reading and writing in Years 1 and 2 show improvement. Progress in mathematics and science is slower. Parents, teachers and pupils say behaviour has improved due to the new warning system which all adults in the school are using.

The headteacher has taken rapid action to involve parents more in the school. For example the 'open door' means teachers and parents get a chance to talk every week about pupils' progress. Parents expressed the view that they would like more opportunities to help the school become a good school. The chair of governors takes a strong lead and has provided other governors with a range of questions to be used when they visit the school as part of their monitoring process.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommends that a further visit in the spring term will be made to carry out joint lesson observations to support leaders in evaluating teaching.

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

External support

The school is drawing on support from the local authority. The local authority is helping the school to make good links with the junior school most pupils move on to. The school has also expressed a wish to be linked with a local outstanding primary school. Powers Hall employs an external improvement partner who is helping them to improve the quality of teaching. There has been no review of governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector