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Mrs Leslie Semper
Headteacher
Thorpe Lea Primary School
Huntingfield Way
Thorpe Lea
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Surrey
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Dear Mrs Semper

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

Following my visit to your school on Tuesday 12 February 2013, 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 November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, four members of the governing body, including the Chair and Vice Chair, and a representative of the local authority. The school's raising achievement plan was evaluated together with records of senior leaders' observations of teaching and learning.

Context

The deputy headteacher has been on long-term sickness absence since the middle of December. Two new teachers have joined the staff, in the Nursery and Year 6. The new Year 6 teacher has joined the senior leadership team and has responsibility for English.

Main findings

The headteacher has provided a strong steer since the inspection and made sure that leaders and teachers are focusing on the areas that require improvement. There is a clear sense of momentum, with appropriate attention being directed to improving the quality of teaching. Leaders' records, from their observations of lessons, are detailed with a clear focus on the quality of learning. Feedback is helpful and related to the aspects of teaching that require improvement. The grades that leaders give for lessons are supported by a suitable range of evidence and provide a convincing picture that teaching is beginning to improve. Feedback from parent governors shows that pupils are beginning to notice a difference in their learning. These are early, positive signs that the school is on the right track.

Members of the senior leadership team show commitment to the direction being set by the headteacher. They are steadily increasing their involvement in raising expectations, evaluating teaching and learning, and helping to bring more consistency to the teaching. The headteacher knows that the less experienced leaders need coaching and support so they can demonstrate strong influence and impact on pupils' learning and progress.

Governors have responded appropriately to the inspection judgements. The Chair of Governors is welcoming opportunities to learn from more experienced governors, through the partnership school and a National Leader of Governance. Some governors are taking up training opportunities to help them strengthen their strategic role and help them provide more challenge for the school's leaders.

The school's raising achievement plan covers all areas that were identified as requiring improvement. The planned actions for improving attainment and achievement in mathematics are not as explicit as those for English. The plan has some clear milestones and targets for improving teaching. Those for pupils' achievement are not as specific and measurable. The plan lacks interim milestones for pupils' progress so that leaders and governors can check that this is improving from term to term. In some cases, the person responsible for leading an action is also identified as the person who will monitor it. This limits the extent to which leaders can monitor actions in an objective way and provide a healthy degree of professional challenge for one another.

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:

- adapt the raising achievement plan to make sure the criteria for success are specific and measurable and that plans for improving mathematics are explicit

- check that the leaders who have responsibility for monitoring aspects of the plan are not the same people who are responsible for leading the planned actions.

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

External support

The local authority is monitoring the progress of the school and has helped broker other support. Senior leaders and governors cite several examples where the external support they have received, through the Local Leader in Education and partnership school, has been helpful. This support, together with visits by consultants, has been appropriately targeted and aligned well to the areas that require improvement as well as supporting governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector