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Karen Lawson
Heage Primary School
School Lane
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Belper
DE56 2AL

Dear Mrs Lawson,

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

Following my visit to your school on 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 deputy head teacher, the Vice-Chair of Governors, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated. A tour of the school was undertaken during which other teachers and some pupils were introduced and briefly spoken with. A short meeting was also held with the headteacher designate.

Context

Since the inspection, the governing body has completed the appointment process for the new headteacher, who is due to take up his role at the start of the summer term in 2013. The governing body and staff have undertaken a number of days of training and development. Re-arrangement of responsibilities means that the school now has new literacy and numeracy coordinators. One part-time teacher is currently on maternity leave.

Main findings

The headteacher and local authority school improvement adviser have undertaken a number of joint monitoring activities, including lesson observation, book scrutiny and discussion with children. Teaching staff have engaged very positively with activities to reassess their approach to teaching and there is now a much greater understanding of, and focus on ensuring that all pupils make good progress. Training has also taken place on strategies to ensure that the most able pupils are suitably stretched and challenged. This included a very successful day considering 'The Pit of Learning', which provided strategies for pupils who are tackling particularly difficult and thought provoking work.

The governing body has undertaken training to enable them to have a wider range of monitoring tools so that they are better able to hold the school to account. The inspection outcomes helped to focus governing body thinking about the skills and qualities required for the new headteacher. The work around making this appointment, together with other training and development activities has had a positive impact on developing the capabilities and confidence of governing body members.

Work has begun on better systems for enabling pupils and parents to understand the progress that pupils are making and their next steps in learning. Final decisions about this have, however, been delayed awaiting the involvement of the new headteacher.

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 whole school progress targets include the proportion of pupils who should be making three levels of progress across Key Stage 2
- include specific targets for the proportions of pupils expected to achieve Levels 5A and 6 by the end of Key Stage 2.

HMI will provide additional support by arranging to join the new headteacher in an evaluation of progress, at some point in the autumn term.

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

External support

The local authority has provided the school with some invaluable support during the current academic year. Many of the issues identified in the inspection had already been identified by the local authority and concerns raised with the school. The school was moved to a higher priority in the allocation of support time. An action

plan was in place at the time of the inspection which only required small modification afterwards. The headteacher has found the support of the school improvement adviser to be rigorous, highly practical and very useful. The governing body has benefitted strongly from the training and development activity organised by the local authority. Some useful additional training time, such as that on 'The Pit of Learning' has been purchased from a private consultant. The local authority mathematics adviser has provided good support in the development of a whole school calculation policy.

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

Yours sincerely

John Peckham
Her Majesty's Inspector