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21 March 2013

Jennifer Wightman
Headteacher
Sundon Park Junior School
Kinross Crescent
Luton
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Dear Mrs Wightman

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Sundon Park Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 21 March 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The headteacher conducted HMI on a short tour of the school.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school's context.

Main findings

The headteacher and other leaders are clearly focused on learning outcomes and teaching. Increased accountability coupled with the expectation that support, coaching and training leads to better teaching is making a difference. Senior leaders share responsibility for checking that pupils are making enough progress. All staff

contribute to the collection and analysis of information about pupils' learning. This is helping them to spot pupils that are falling behind so that steps can be taken to provide extra help. Literacy and numeracy leaders are training staff to improve the teaching of reading, writing and problem solving. The timetable has been adjusted to allow more time for these activities. The school improvement plan is too complicated. It includes areas that the school already does well rather than concentrating key areas to move the school to good. Completion dates are specified but checkpoints along the way are missing so that leaders can ensure deadlines will be met. Those identified to lead actions are also involved in reviewing them.

The governing body is better informed. Governors know how to check that the school is moving in the right direction. They understand their role in monitoring staff performance. Keen to improve its effectiveness, the governing body arranged an external evaluation to identify what it does well and where improvements can be made.

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 recommend that further action is taken to:

- simplify the school's improvement plan and support it with a more detailed action plan focusing on the actions required to move the school to good
- ensure that responsibility for making actions happen is a different person to those evaluating their impact on learning
- make clear what will have been achieved at specific points in the 'journey'
- make use of Ofsted's publications to learn from the best schools.

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

External support

The local authority monitors the school's work. Visits are too infrequent to challenge the school to check for rapid improvement. The school would benefit from external advice on how to support pupils with complex behavioural difficulties following changes in provision within the authority. Limited funding for the school to work closely with an outstanding local school has been used productively to improve teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector