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Mrs S Connell and Mrs M Trigg
Interim headteachers
Queen's Dyke CP School
Burwell Drive
Witney
OX28 5JW

Dear Mrs Connell and Mrs Trigg

Monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to a school requiring improvement

Following my visit to your school on 1 May 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.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors, and two representatives of the local authority. You showed me around the school and we visited every class to see the pupils at work. I talked to a number of pupils and I looked at their books. I evaluated the school's improvement plan. I looked at a range of documentation, including the minutes of recent governing body meetings, lesson plans, records of teaching observations, reports by representatives of the local authority, and records of the training that teachers have received since the inspection in January.

Context

The interim headteachers will be in post until 31 August 2013. A new headteacher has been appointed and she will take up post on 1 September 2013.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

The interim headteachers have acted quickly to improve teaching. They observe teaching regularly, focusing specifically on how well pupils are learning in lessons. Teachers are given precise points for improvement and senior leaders check that teachers act on these points. Frequent training for teachers and teaching assistants focuses on the most important areas of teaching that need to improve. This is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching, but the pace of learning is still too slow in some lessons because not all pupils are stretched by the tasks they are set. In addition, pupils are not always clear about what they are learning in lessons or what they need to do to be successful. A new marking policy is in place but not all teachers are yet using this effectively. As a result, pupils are not always given clear advice about the next steps they need to take in order to improve.

Staff have a better understanding of pupils' achievement because the system for checking pupils' progress is now much more effective. Senior leaders regularly make sure teachers' assessments of pupils' learning are accurate. Teachers now identify the pupils who are underachieving and teachers are working hard to help them catch up. This has yet to have a significant impact on pupils' achievement overall. School data show that the achievement of certain groups of pupils needs to improve more rapidly, especially that of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils eligible for free school meals.

The new school improvement plan addresses the areas requiring improvement identified by the inspection. Targets are necessarily challenging. The interim headteachers are driving improvement, but it is unclear how other leaders are improving teaching or pupils' progress.

An external review of governance is partially complete. As a result, governors know that they need to evaluate the school's progress more effectively, but it is not clear how and when they will do this. Governors report that they are now challenging the school more but this is not yet reflected in the minutes of meetings. Governors' committees have new terms of reference that are more sharply focused on school improvement. The Chair of Governors meets regularly with the interim headteachers to monitor the progress the school is making. Not all governors know the strengths and weaknesses of teaching.

Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- increase teachers' focus on improving the achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those pupils eligible for free school meals
- make sure that all pupils are stretched in lessons
- clarify the roles that all leaders, including governors, will have in bringing about improvement and evaluating the school's progress
- ensure that plans are in place for an effective handover from the interim headteachers to the new headteacher, and for the induction of the new headteacher.

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

External support

The interim headteachers are making good use of the range of effective support provided by the local authority. For example, the phonics adviser has helped introduce the whole school approach to teaching phonics. Her evaluations show that this approach is beginning to improve the teaching of phonics. Other advisers have provided helpful training for staff. The school improvement officer has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. He supports the interim headteachers, but also challenges them effectively by monitoring the progress the school is making. The local authority is providing effective support for governance and has carried out the first part of an external review of the governing body's work.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
Her Majesty's Inspector