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Suzanne Ryan
Headteacher
Katherines Primary School
Brookside
Harlow
Essex
CM19 5NJ

Dear Ms Ryan

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Katherines Primary School, Harlow.

Following my visit to your school on 14 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 February 2013.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and your senior team. I spoke to two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I met a representative from the local authority and your school improvement partner. I evaluated the post-Ofsted action plan and looked at monitoring activities that you have carried out since the inspection. We visited some lessons briefly.

Context

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

Main findings

School leaders and governors are not yet demonstrating the capacity to move the school to good. Progress made on the key issues identified at the inspection has been uneven. In some areas, such as assessing work accurately to match tasks more closely to the need of pupils, strategies are beginning to show positive impact. In other areas, such as governance and effectiveness of leadership, progress is slow. The post-Ofsted action plan is not a useful tool for improvement. Actions and success criteria are not sufficiently focused on the difference they will make to

accelerating progress and to improving teaching and learning. Key staff are identified to lead and monitor activities but evaluation arrangements are vague.

With the support of your senior team, you are helping teachers to develop their skills. Staff are watching each other teach which is enabling them to reflect on their own practice and learn from others. Your evaluation of teaching shows that some teachers are acting on advice, while others are not improving quickly enough. Your feedback to teachers following lesson observations must provide clearer timescales to address any shortcomings. Staff are attending training events. However, professional development is not brought together in a coherent way to support your post-Ofsted action plan and match the areas you wish to improve. It is therefore difficult for governors to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

An external review of governance has not happened. Governors are receiving some training and advice from an independent consultant. They are linked to key issues for improvement but they are not checking that strategies are working with sufficient rigour.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- simplify the action plan, review success criteria and clarify timescales
- act swiftly on the recommendation to undertake an external review of governance
- ensure that development points for teachers are remedied quickly.

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

External support

The school is not drawing sufficiently on the expertise of the local authority, such as using the 'Getting to Good' programme and seeking advice on action planning. The school is funding the support of a school improvement partner and is using a range of professional networks to share good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector