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Ms Justine Abbott
Headteacher
Foxdell Infant School
Dallow Road
Luton
LU1 1TG

Dear Ms Abbott

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Foxdell Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 20 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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. The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2013.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and a representative of the local authority. I held a telephone discussion with the Chair of the Governing Body. I evaluated the school action plan, reviewed the most recent information on pupil achievement and visited classes to see pupils and staff at work.

Context

Since the inspection the assistant headteacher has resigned. An interim assistant headteacher is in place.

Main findings

You have prioritised improvements in the Reception classes. Teachers' assessments of pupils' progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now more accurate because external training provided by the local authority and moderation with a successful school have proven effective. The deputy headteacher's meetings with reception teachers focused on pupils' progress are helping to challenge any underachievement early. Your meetings with teachers and support staff have helped

to increase the focus of planning and classroom practice onto pupils' learning and progress. Teachers and teaching assistants are now planning together. Your audit of early years provision is enabling staff to build on strengths and tackle common weaknesses together. A remaining challenge is getting a better balance between the learning led by adults and more that is stimulated by pupils' curiosity and enquiry, and between the classroom and more use of the outdoors as a stimulus for learning.

The action plan shows that you have suitable strategies to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage further. This part of the plan indicates a logical programme of activities, clear success criteria, specific responsibilities and timelines. The involvement of staff, governors and other schools is explicit which makes it easy for them to understand their role and evaluate their impact. Other parts of the action plan are weaker. The planned improvements to teaching and raising attainment across the school need to be clearer. The baseline and targets for raising attainment and attendance need more detail. The milestones are not specific enough to help governors structure their visits and meetings at key points in time.

Teachers and support staff are receiving more frequent feedback through your lesson 'drop-ins' and through opportunities to observe each other at work. The use of video is helping staff to improve the quality of their teaching through better self-evaluation. The reorganisation of lunchtime activities is starting to promote pupils' independence as a basis for wider improvement in the classroom. However, pupils' progress data shows that pupils are not making equally good progress over time; assessments show that pupils supported by pupil premium funding still lag behind others in four of the six Key Stage 1 classes. Governors are now in a stronger position to challenge the school about such issues since receiving data training by the local authority.

Work to improve the impact of subject leaders is at an early stage. Your preparation in the form of a handbook that makes middle leaders' roles clear, is a sensible start. Display outside of classrooms is underused to showcase pupils' achievements across the curriculum and to capture pupils' interest in different subjects.

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

- ensure that the school's action plan has more measurable success criteria, including challenging targets for pupils' attainment and attendance
- make milestones more specific so that governors, parents and carers are able to monitor the school's improvement more incrementally
- evaluate the progress made by different groups of pupils when monitoring the quality of teaching, including individuals supported by pupil premium funding
- reorganise roles and responsibilities where necessary in order to accelerate improvement in subject leadership and cross-curricular working.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school is working collaboratively with good and outstanding schools. This includes work with the junior school. A local authority specialist in the Early Years Foundation Stage has advised the school following the inspection. A review of teaching by the school improvement adviser is scheduled.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector