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Mrs Jackie Jackson
Ladysmith Junior School
Pretoria Road
Exeter
Devon
EX1 2PT

Dear Mrs Jackson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ladysmith Junior School

Following my visit to your school on Tuesday 25 June, 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 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. HMI conducted a learning walk with the headteacher and completed a scrutiny of pupils' mathematics and English work with senior and subject leaders.

Context

The school is in the process of federating with Ladysmith Infant school. There have been no other contextual changes since the school was inspected.

Main findings

With local authority support, senior leaders have revised the school development plan to address the main areas that require improvement. The plan includes appropriate actions and detailed targets to raise the quality of teaching and learning and strengthen leadership and management. In the short time available since the inspection, the plan has been revised to include a number of actions to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The local authority has deployed literacy and numeracy advisors to work with the school during the autumn term to monitor the school's progress and produce further action plans to raise standards in English and mathematics. The head has evaluated and reported to governors the progress the school has made in the six weeks since the inspection. These evaluations are more effective where they provide a clear link to the impact of the actions and less helpful when written as a narrative that describes the completion of actions.

The role of the subject leaders for English and mathematics is developing positively. With senior leaders they have drawn up a timetable of events to consider evidence from a range of sources in order to evaluate improvements in the quality of teaching and their impact on pupils' progress. They have good subject knowledge and have shown a clear understanding of the key priorities required to move the school forward. The headteacher has revised systems to more frequently track pupils' achievement. Teachers have taken on responsibility for recording and analysing information and data on pupils' progress. This information has been used effectively to draw up class action plans for target groups of pupils and has helped to raise teachers' expectations.

The school has reviewed its marking policy. Teachers are now expected to identify and share with pupils the steps they need to take to improve their work. However, scrutiny of pupils' work shows that marking across the school remains of variable quality and is not being used effectively by all teachers to adjust their planning. Scrutiny of pupils work also showed that tasks are not consistently being differentiated for pupils of different abilities. On occasion the objectives of lessons are too vague and a single objective is presented to the whole class rather than being pitched at different levels for different abilities.

The governing body is clearly motivated and committed to moving the school forward. Governors are aware of the need to gain first-hand evidence of the work of the school. However, they have yet to incorporate specific monitoring events within the school's monitoring timetable. Governors acknowledge their need for a better understanding of the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress and are arranging suitable training.

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

- Leaders and governors ensure that the school development plans and monitoring schedule are integrated and detail an unremitting focus on raising achievement

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 local authority has revised its procedures to monitor assessment and achievement data in order to more quickly identify schools requiring additional support. They have provided appropriate support for the headteacher and this has resulted in a development plan that addresses the areas identified at the last inspection. In addition, local authority advisors have helped to validate senior leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching and have supported the school to develop procedures to ensure performance management systems are focused on raising performance.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield

Her Majesty's Inspector