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Mrs Rachael Nicholls
Headteacher
Shavington Primary School
Southbank Avenue
Shavington
Crewe
Cheshire
CW2 5BP

Dear Mrs Nicholls

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Shavington Primary School, Cheshire East

Following my visit to your school on 5 July 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the headteacher designate, other senior leaders, pupils, as well as the Chair and most representatives of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation also took place with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's 'Requires Improvement plan' as you call it, was evaluated. A range of documentation was considered, including the school's records concerning pupils' current achievement, performance management and the monitoring of the quality of teaching. Additionally a small sample of pupils' work from across year groups in English and mathematics was looked at.

Context

The Acting Head will return to her substantive post as Assistant Headteacher when the new headteacher takes up his appointment in September 2013. Consequently other adjustments to the senior leadership team need careful induction and management to maintain the team's sharp focus on the recommendations for improvement identified in the last inspection report.

Main findings

Since the last inspection you and leaders at all levels, including governors, have honestly accepted the judgement of Requires Improvement from the last inspection, which was a disappointing outcome for the school. You have also worked hard and with success to maintain staff morale since then and to improve the way in which you communicate with parents and carers about how you tackle bullying on the rare occasions when it occurs. The great majority of parents, carers and pupils that I met on my visit were content on this issue. You all clearly now understand the reasons for the outcome of the inspection, are very willing to move forward in the process of 'getting to good' and eager to learn how to achieve this as quickly as possible.

The school improvement plan you have produced focuses on all the recommendations for improvement from the last inspection. However, you now recognise that it requires further adjustment in order to drive the pace of improvement fast enough for the school to become good by the time of the next S5 inspection in 18 months to two years. In particular there needs to be an even sharper focus on raising the achievement of groups of pupils and individual pupils who have previously underachieved and notably those known to be eligible for the pupil premium. Nevertheless you and your senior leaders and governors have begun to tackle the recommendations for improvement from the last report effectively.

You have realised the key importance of accelerating the rates of progress of groups and individual pupils. This will require a much finer analysis and use by all staff and governors, of the assessment information held by the school. You have already begun to set more challenging targets for pupils' progress and although you know that much work remains to be done, the outcomes for pupils in the summer 2013 tests have begun to show some signs of improvement. It is vital that all staff understand that they must have higher expectations of pupils of all abilities and especially of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, if the school is to sustain the momentum of improvement from September.

You have an accurate view of the quality of teaching in the school, formed through paired lessons observations to moderate your judgements. Feedback to teachers after lesson observations is generally robust but clearer linkage of feedback with the teacher standards and with appropriately tailored professional development would improve consistency and accountability. The marking seen during the inspection was generally regular and the Tickled Pink and Green for Growth strategies make clear to pupils how well they are doing and what they need to improve. Pupils now have more opportunities to respond to their teachers' advice.

Your senior leaders and those in charge of subjects show good capacity to take the school forward and the arrival of the new head teacher should add further challenge and support. However, he and other staff who are taking on new roles and responsibilities will need strong external support in establishing themselves confidently to challenge the school to do better.

Governors are fully committed to the improvement of the school. However they have not previously had enough independent information about aspects of the school's work, especially about pupils' progress, to pre-empt any decline in the school's performance. They

are now more knowledgeable about the use of assessment information and further training is planned.

Governors know how the pupil premium is spent but in the past their lack of knowledge about pupil's progress has also hampered their ability to ensure that the funds are targeted where there is greatest need. Therefore gaps between the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils are not closing fast enough. Governors are strongly recommended to undertake an external review of their practice as soon as possible, in order to mount as effective a challenge to the school as they would wish.

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:

- Sharpen the 'Requires Improvement' plan so that there are very clear links between each action proposed and its precise impact on the progress of groups of pupils and individuals.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by improving the accountability and consistency of arrangements for performance management and for monitoring the quality of teaching. For example, establish clear links with the teacher standards and appropriate, targeted professional development, making use of good and outstanding practice already in the school and of other external support.
- Work with the local authority and other sources of external support, to put in place robust arrangements to support staff new to the school or taking up new roles and responsibilities, including the new headteacher and senior leaders and those in charge of subjects, so that they rapidly become as effective as possible in improving the school.

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

At the time of the last inspection the school was in receipt of only light touch support from the local authority. This is now to be intensified from September 2013 by regular monitoring of the school's progress against the four aspects of the inspection framework and especially the areas for improvement from the last inspection. The school employs the services of an external consultant, for example to assist with the quality assurance of teaching and to advise on the improvement systems for tracking pupils' progress. This work has contributed positively to the setting of more challenging targets for pupils. The school also has good links with a network of local schools and some further afield. This is encouraging the sharing of good practice. To be most effective, this collaborative work should be firmly linked to the school's priorities for improvement and to the outcomes of performance management.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

Her Majesty's Inspector