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Mrs Jennifer Wightman
Headteacher
Sundon Park Junior School
Kinross Crescent
Luton
LU3 3JU

Dear Mrs Wightman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sundon Park Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 11 September 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 since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 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, teaching and non-teaching staff, teaching assistants, pupils, six governors, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Work included in the school improvement and action plans was evaluated. Policies, systems and procedures relating to pupils' behaviour, welfare, health and safety were examined in detail, as well as random examples of the school's record keeping about individual incidents. Pupils contributed in a meeting where they explained their understanding about what to do if they felt upset or worried about the actions of other pupils or staff. They explained the school's expectations for good behaviour and what action the school takes if they are hurt or injured during the school day. Together, we visited all classes and to observe pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour. We watched almost all of the permanent teaching staff and teaching

assistants teaching. The school's latest data on pupils' achievement was discussed and evaluated.

Context

Since my first visit in March 2013, three full time teachers have left the school and three new teachers have joined. The role of Chair of the Governing Body has changed hands and some new governors have been appointed.

Main findings

The school has acted promptly and decisively on all of the points for improvement outlined at my last visit. The school's development plan has been improved. It is broken down into termly action plans to make it more manageable. Governors are clear about their role and, with the help of an external review, they have identified what they need to do to improve their effectiveness. Even so, their understanding of data is insecure. They know which groups of pupils are funded through the extra funding provided by the government (pupil premium) and how this funding is spent. They are less confident in knowing whether or not it is making a difference. Not all governors are up to speed in their understanding of how the school plans to spend its additional government funding for the delivery of physical education and sport.

The school's data shows that, with the exception of Year 5, pupils in all other year groups made more than expected progress last year as a result of good teaching. Weaknesses in teaching in Year 5 were tackled authoritatively. Leaders and managers took radical steps to intervene. The upper school was re-organised after the national tests in May, placing strong teachers in Year 5 to give pupils the best possible chance of making up lost ground. Careful consideration has been given to the quality of the teachers receiving these pupils in Year 6. Performance management systems have been used effectively to address and, in some cases, eradicate weaknesses in teaching. Senior leaders set high expectations that teaching must be good. Teaching seen during this inspection was variable. Some was very strong and some required more work to be good. Senior leaders are on the case and know what needs to be done to achieve consistency. Their expectations for the progress pupils are expected to make are high. The steps the school is taking to accelerate the progress all pupils are impressive. Outcomes are being monitored carefully to ensure that these interventions are working.

Thorough scrutiny of the school's policies, systems, recording and reporting of any incidents relating to pupils' welfare, health and safety revealed that they are fit for purpose and are followed diligently. Minor adjustments are required to ensure that policies reflect the government's latest guidance and that the governing body reviews policies regularly. Pupils confirmed that they know exactly how school procedures work in practice. All were confident that they feel safe at school and are looked after well by staff. They know what to do if they are troubled or need support and have confidence in staff to support them.

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:

- Ensure that governors are fully conversant with any additional funding provided by the government and ensure that this money leads to pupils' improved achievement.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that it is good across all classes and year groups.

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

Since my last visit the local authority has had more contact with the school. Links with an outstanding local school have been sustained. The local authority has accompanied school leaders on Ofsted's seminars to improve English and mathematics and has used this in leading staff training. The school has not received written reports following visits by the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector