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Mrs Lucy Luke
Acting headteacher
Gobowen Primary School
School Lane
Gobowen
SY11 3LD

Dear Mrs Luke

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Gobowen Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 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.

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

- ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better
- ensure that the plan for improvement has targets which are focused on improving outcomes for groups of pupils
- improve governors' skills of using assessment data so that they have a strong knowledge of the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Evidence

During the visit meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, one other teacher, a higher level teaching assistant, a number of parents, a representative of

the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. A range of documentation was reviewed, including teachers' planning and lesson monitoring records. The school improvement plans were evaluated. The inspector and acting headteacher jointly visited all classes, looked at samples of pupils' books and held discussions with a small number of pupils about their work.

Context

The headteacher left the school at the end of June 2013. The deputy headteacher led and managed the school as acting headteacher until the end of the summer term. A new acting headteacher took up post at the start of this term. An acting deputy headteacher also started at the beginning of this term to prepare and cover for the forthcoming maternity leave of the deputy headteacher. The governing body is planning to appoint a new substantive headteacher to start in January 2014.

Main findings

Your work is building strongly on the improvements started by the deputy headteacher at the end of last term. Staff, governors and many parents report that the improvements made in such a short time have transformed the school. The plan for improvement that you produced with the deputy headteacher accurately identifies how the areas for improvement will be addressed. There are many clear milestones for improvement which will allow senior leaders and governors to check on progress, such as proportion of teaching that is good or better by certain times in the year. However, you are aware that, because your analysis of the assessment data has only recently taken place, some of the targets are not focused enough on improving outcomes for groups of pupils, such as classes, boys and girls, and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals.

You have improved the system for checking pupils' progress. This is raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and making them aware of those pupils who are not making good progress. The meetings you have with teachers to discuss pupils' progress now focus more sharply on individuals and groups of pupils who are not achieving well. Teachers are now more aware of the need to plan lessons which cater for the wide range of abilities in the class. The regular newsletter to parents and the weekly planner to staff are ensuring that both these groups are kept well informed about all aspects of school life.

Our visits to all classes and our look at pupils' work in books raised some concerns. In some classes, the pupils were working hard and making good progress. In these classes, the work in pupils' books showed good challenge, especially for those of middle and lower ability. However, you agree that this is not consistent and aspects such as over-use of worksheets, ineffective management of pupils' behaviour and lack of challenge, especially for the more-able pupils, are issues which you need to address as a matter of urgency. The indoor area for the reception children was not stimulating. The outdoor reception area provides many opportunities for teachers to

make children's learning exciting and enjoyable. However, lack of maintenance and attention has resulted in the area looking drab and uninviting.

Governors are now receiving more accurate information about all aspects of the school and are developing a better understanding of how to use this information to provide challenge to the school's leaders. They are aware that they need to improve their skills of using assessment data so that they have a strong knowledge of the achievement of different groups of pupils, such as those who are supported by pupil premium funding and the more able.

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

Following the resignation of the substantive headteacher, the local authority acted with urgency to ensure that the school was provided with effective leadership and management which would raise staff morale, improve communication with parents and accelerate pupils' progress. The local authority has supported senior leaders in putting together a comprehensive plan for improvement and has organised a range of supporting activities to help senior leaders and governors continue to improve the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector