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Ms C Nesbit
Headteacher
Mrs Bland's Infant School
Jordan's Road
Burghfield Common
RG7 5LJ

Dear Ms Nesbit

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mrs Bland's Infant 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 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:

- Eradicate any remaining teaching that is not yet good.
- Further increase the detail of the analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, are disabled or have special educational needs and those who are poor attenders.
- Use the now accurate assessment of pupils' achievements to set them more challenging targets.
- Increase the detail contained within planning documents so that there is more precision about what needs to be done, when tasks should be completed and who is responsible for carrying them out .

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 reviewed together with other key documents including the most recent assessment of pupils' progress and information derived from monitoring activities of the school and local authority. Her Majesty's Inspector briefly observed teaching in most parts of the school.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been several changes to teaching staff and school management. A new substantive headteacher and deputy started at the beginning of the new school year.

Main findings

The new headteacher is successfully drawing on her own experience as an outstanding practitioner in her previous school. The new leadership team have made a good start in strengthening teaching. Robust action has been taken to improve any teaching that is below acceptable standards. New teaching teams have been established and there is an appropriate programme of professional development to improve staff expertise. The impact on these changes has yet to be established because some have only recently been introduced. A new performance management process is about to be introduced which will ensure that pupils' progress is at the centre of evaluating teachers' performance.

Attendance is improving. School leaders have worked closely with the local authority to follow-up on absences and to encourage parents to send their children to school, especially those groups of pupils whose attendance has been low. The school will be taking robust action to improve persistent absenteeism. The school has taken steps to widen the breadth of what is taught to broaden the appeal of school and encourage pupils to attend.

School leaders are acutely aware of the need to close the gap between the performance of disadvantaged and other pupils. They have improved the detail and accuracy of the assessment information about pupils' progress. It is providing a much more accurate view of pupil's achievements. However, there is still a way to go before data analysis is giving a complete picture of the progress of all groups, including those who are disadvantaged. Targets are not yet challenging and aspirational for all pupils.

Governors are rapidly growing in confidence and are asking more challenging questions of the headteacher. They are improving the efficiency of the way they work and have a strong determination to take a more active role in raising the school's performance. They are now starting to develop ways to gather their own first-hand information about how well the school is performing.

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

School leaders and governors have worked closely with the local authority to resolve personnel issues and make staff appointments. The local authority regularly monitors the progress of the school. Local authority consultants have successfully helped school leaders to improve pupil attendance and behaviour. They have also helped to check the accuracy of the assessment of pupils' progress so that school leaders have a more accurate picture of pupils' starting points at the beginning of the school year.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Towl
Her Majesty's Inspector