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Ms Tracey Kneale
Executive Headteacher
Ewyas Harold Primary School
Ewyas Harold
HR2 0EY

Dear Ms Kneale

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ewyas Harold Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 October 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. However, governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- make rapid progress in completing the external review of governance already commissioned, and thereby produce a detailed action plan for improvement of governance
- complete the skills audit of governors already underway so that a programme of training and development for governors can be urgently implemented
- build on the successes of the school's new behaviour policy by ensuring that pupils develop confidence in all staff, including lunchtime supervisors, to resolve incidents of poor behaviour.

Evidence

During the visit, discussions were held with you, senior leaders from Marlbrook School who have executive responsibilities for leadership in Ewyas Harold, the assistant headteacher in charge of the school, pupils, and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. No governors were available to speak with during the visit. The school's improvement plans were evaluated. I visited lessons briefly with you on a tour of the school. Documentation was scrutinised, including records of the outcomes of monitoring activities and of the work of the governing body.

Context

Since the inspection, to support the professional development of teachers at Ewyas Harold School, three teachers have gone to teach at Marlbrook and they have been replaced by Marlbrook teachers on secondment. One of these teachers leads Ewyas Harold on a day-to-day basis. A new vice chair of governors has been elected, and the standards committee of the governing body has taken responsibility for monitoring teaching quality as well as pupil standards.

Main findings

The governing body has not taken sufficiently urgent and decisive action to review its effectiveness and plan for improvement. While the executive leadership team from Marlbrook School has been highly effective in improving all aspects of provision, insufficient action has been taken to develop the capacity of governance to ensure that school improvement is sustained over time. An initial meeting has been held with a national leader of governance to initiate a review of governance, but too few steps have been taken to ensure that all governors have the skills and understanding necessary to carry out their roles effectively. Minutes of the Standards Committee in September 2013 indicate that it is beginning to give more scrutiny to outcomes for pupils, but more generally there has been insufficient rigour in questioning and challenge from all but a very small number of governors.

Pupils speak very positively of the impact of many changes set in place since the arrival of you and your team in an executive capacity around two terms prior to the last inspection. Pupils feel the school is safer and more orderly. They have much confidence in leaders to resolve any problems. They say behaviour has improved, but over-boisterous behaviour in the playground is not always fully or speedily resolved by the supervisors on duty.

The school's action plan for improvement is highly effective in ensuring that teachers understand their pupils' needs and capabilities, plan effectively to promote good progress, and have high expectations for pupils' work and conduct. The plan does not, however, set out clear enough mechanisms for involving governors in

evaluating progress against the plan against overall targets at key points in the future. Nonetheless, the very good progress made in implementing this plan is immediately evident in the classrooms. Pupils' books are well organised and increasingly well-presented. Pupils' targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy are clear and well-understood, and pupils acknowledge that they have made significant gains in their reading and writing skills as a result of new strategies, including a whole-school approach to the teaching of phonics. The effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment has improved markedly through moderation and training for staff undertaken by school leaders. Teachers are able to use assessment information to plan work to offer support and challenge for pupils across the ability range, although leaders acknowledge the priority of extending further challenge to the more able. Pupils' work is marked in detail with positive praise for success and clear points for improvement, though pupils do not all systematically respond to these.

As a result of the improvements in provision, outcomes for pupils have improved markedly across the school. The achievement of pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, measured in unvalidated national tests and assessment scores, rose sharply in 2013.

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 worked closely with the school to address shortcomings in leadership. It has facilitated a link with Marlbrook School which has been highly effective in improving provision and outcomes for pupils by drawing on the skills of leaders and teachers at that outstanding school. Improvement officers from the local authority have emphasised strongly to governors the urgent need to improve the effectiveness of governance in monitoring the quality of education at the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Her Majesty's Inspector