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Mr Andrew Hunt
Headteacher
Golborne Community Primary School
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WA3 3NN

Dear Mr Hunt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Golborne Community Primary School, Wigan

Following my visit with David Selby Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 10 October 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

You, 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 action plan by a) stating the proportions of good and outstanding teaching expected at key milestones b) differentiating the progress expected of the most able pupils c) identifying where the governing body is to play a role in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the action taken
- carry out an audit of the skills of senior and middle leaders to identify precisely where training and support are needed, and to heighten awareness of the responsibilities and expectations of leadership roles
- ensure that the focus and content of external consultants' work is tailored precisely to the school's needs
- consider nominating a small number of governors to take prime responsibility for checking on and evaluating the school's progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Senior Development Officer from the local authority and a headteacher nominated by the local authority to monitoring the school's progress. We discussed the action taken since the last inspection. The school development plan was evaluated along with reports from consultants.

Context

The deputy headteacher has been absent since May. Two teachers left the school at the end of the summer term. Two teachers have been appointed on a year's contract: a newly qualified teacher is working with Year 3 pupils and a recently qualified teacher with Year 4 pupils. A part-time teacher has been appointed on a short term contract to work with pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding.

Main findings

You have continued to build on the work started in the summer term to ensure that staff are fully aware of what is expected of them if the school is to improve. The governing body and staff accept that pupils have not been best served and much has been done in a short time to inject rigour and to establish new ways of working. You have drawn on contacts and consultants to provide external appraisals of the school's practice and pupils' performance. The reports have confirmed your overview, reinforced the outcomes of the inspection in June and pinpointed aspects of particular concern. For example, previous assessments of pupils' attainment and progress have often been generous and unreliable as a baseline for setting targets and for judging progress. You have rightly introduced a programme of regular assessment and review of pupils' progress with targets linked closely to performance management.

The school development plan reflects fully the two substantial areas for improvement identified in the inspection in June. There is a clear emphasis on raising achievement quickly but not enough to identify what is to be expected of the most able pupils. The target of 100% good teaching by summer 2014 is not ambitious enough. There is scope to identify proportions of good and outstanding teaching expected at each milestone, and possibly to link these to the key stages and/or particular subjects. The inclusion of assessment as a third priority heightens the need for accurate assessment and moderation of judgements.

Anecdotal evidence indicates a change of culture and increased professionalism. You are very clear in your expectations of staff and how the school is to operate. Staff have acted on advice and worked together to reorganise rooms and resources. Good examples are the new computer/meeting room and also the more purposeful use of the outdoors for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Support staff have taken the initiative in setting up their own learning zones with displays to support pupils' learning.

You and the governing body have shown decisive action in tackling weaknesses in teaching and professional conduct. Since taking up the role in April, you have shouldered leadership of the school single-handedly. Senior staff are stepping up their involvement as they grow in confidence through mentoring, coaching and guidance from you and other practitioners

within the consortium. However, staff accept that they lack experience and skills in driving improvement and that targeted professional development is essential.

The governing body is increasing the rigour of its work. It has sought guidance from the local authority and introduced links with classes and participation in staff development sessions and monitoring activities, such as a scrutiny of pupils' work. The restructuring of committees of the governing body has drawn on expertise and ensured all governors are fully informed of the school's progress. It is less clear in the action plan how and when the governing body will hold the school to account; there is potential for a small number of governors to take on this responsibility.

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 school is part of the Leigh, Lowton and Golborne schools' partnership and is receiving support from the director. The school has employed a school improvement partner who compiled a comprehensive analysis of the school's performance in 2012/13 with resultant questions to be considered regarding provision and expectations in 2013/14. In early September, an external consultant provided a position statement with points for development to bring about change quickly. Given the considerable support to date, which has prompted action, highlighted steps taken and yet to take, you and the governing body are right to consider how best to ensure value for money and training content that matches the school's needs. The local authority has provided additional funding to enable some organisational changes and also specialist advice regarding staffing. The headteacher who has been nominated to monitor the school's progress has acted as a sounding board and advised on the compilation of the action plan. She is fully aware of the action taken to date.

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

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen

Her Majesty's Inspector