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18 October 2013

Mrs Stevens
Lonesome Primary School
Grove Road
Mitcham
Surrey
CR4 1SD

Dear Mrs Stevens

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lonesome Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 July 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and 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:

- define the roles of senior leaders more precisely so that they can be made more accountable for the areas of the school's work for which they are responsible
- establish links with a good or outstanding school to allow leaders and governors to learn from examples of excellent practice in leadership and governance.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. Short visits were made to lessons in the Nursery, Reception and Year 1. Books from pupils in Years 2 to 6 were checked to assess the impact of actions taken to improve writing. Documents recording the monitoring of teaching and learning were scrutinised.

Main findings

Leaders are not taking effective action to improve teaching. The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching prior to the inspection was over generous. Leaders have not analysed the reasons why teaching needs to improve accurately enough so current monitoring is not sharp or rigorous. As a result, leaders and governors are not clear about how the planned actions to tackle the areas for improvement are going to make a difference.

Leaders are not taking effective action to improve leadership and management. Leaders and governors do not have a realistic understanding of what needs to be done to make it good. You understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide a clear direction but you take on too much of the work yourself. Senior leaders are very committed and work hard but they do not provide you with enough high quality support because they need help to develop their skills. Their responsibilities are not clearly defined which means that they are not being held to account for the aspects of the school's work which they are in charge of.

Governors are beginning to develop a more accurate understanding of what needs to be done; they accept that there needs to be more rapid improvement, particularly in leadership, but they do not know how best to challenge weaknesses. They do not have opportunities to learn about good and outstanding governance and have been slow to arrange the external review of governance, due to take place in November.

Leaders are taking effective action to improve writing. The section of the action plan that sets out how the school is going to improve writing is more precise than the sections about teaching, and leadership and management. It is clear which leaders are responsible for checking that writing is improving. The new writing and marking policy is being followed by all staff and this is helping to improve pupils' writing. Regular meetings have been introduced to check a sample of books from each class provide good opportunities to share practice, check consistency of the marking across the school and to hold staff to account for progress of the pupils they teach. Success will depend on how accurately leaders are able to check and evaluate the impact of this approach.

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

External support is provided by the local authority manager for school improvement who visits the school regularly to provide guidance and review progress. Review findings present a more positive picture of the actions the school is taking than evidence gathered during this monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Wellham
Her Majesty's Inspector