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Susan Gibbons
Headteacher
Eastlands Junior School
Netherfield Lane
Meden Vale
NG20 9PA

Dear Mrs Gibbons

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Eastlands Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 6 November 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 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:

- Use the improved information on pupils' progress to increase the achievement targets for each class and include these as success criteria in the school improvement plan.
- Include in the school improvement plan the governors' contribution to evaluating the impact of new methods.
- Provide teachers with a programme of training in letters and sounds (phonics) that is carefully planned to meet their particular needs.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress and school self-evaluation reports were evaluated.

Main findings

The declining trend in standards of attainment, evident in the two years before the section 5 inspection, has been halted. The 2013 unvalidated national data for pupils' achievement at the end of Year 6 showed a marked improvement with standards and progress in English and mathematics beginning to rise above the national average. This is much closer to where the school's performance was before the decline started. The improvement in pupils' writing was particularly notable as their progress is now significantly better than expected.

These improvements are the result of improved teaching, particularly in terms of lessons that are better planned to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. Your new records of pupils' progress have contributed significantly to this because they show clearly the level that pupils have reached in their work and what must be taught to help them achieve more. Your records also show that pupils' achievement is improving, but this is not fully reflected in targets being raised. Nor are your achievement targets explicit in the school improvement plan, therefore it is not always clear how staff and governors can judge whether new teaching methods are getting standards to where they want them to be.

You have taken appropriate steps to ensure your staff share accountability for school improvement, for example by giving them responsibilities more in line with the levels of pay they were awarded before your appointment. You are now beginning to involve all teachers systematically in monitoring work across the school and introducing improvements where necessary. The impact of this work is at an early stage. You ensure that teachers receive training to help them improve their practice and they are learning much from collaborative work with colleagues in your new partner school. This, however, is not sufficient to help them acquire the skills they need to provide systematic phonics teaching tailored to the needs of the pupils.

Your improvement plan for future improvement, overall, is fit for purpose. Development tasks are practical and manageable and clear milestones indicate no undue delay in increasing the effectiveness of teaching and leadership. The Governing Body has considerably improved its role in monitoring the implementation of the improvement plan and holding the school to account for its impact on pupils' achievement. Each governor is assigned to monitor one of the plan's priorities and they gather evidence from observation, reports and discussion with staff and pupils. This work is not included as part of the monitoring schedule in the improvement plan which makes it difficult to accurately evaluate this key part of the Governing Body's work.

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 systematically monitors the school's progress in raising standards and they have an accurate understanding of what has been achieved so far. They ensure that leaders and teachers have access to the professional development they need to meet school improvement priorities. The partnership brokered with a nearby similar school has been particularly helpful in enabling teachers to learn new approaches by seeing them in practice.

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

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector