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Angela Belgrove
Headteacher
Lime Walk Primary School
Lime Walk
Bennetts End
HP3 9LN

Dear Mrs Belgrove

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lime Walk Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. You should take immediate action to:

- ensure that all teachers receive accurate and helpful feedback on the quality of their teaching
- improve the accuracy of assessments in Early Years Foundation Stage and in mathematics
- implement the outcomes of the external review of governance.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Early Years and Key Stage 1 Leader, four governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated your post-inspection action plan, visited classrooms and looked at work in pupils' books.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have appointed one new teacher. School leaders are now receiving support from a Local Leader of Education. The local authority has reviewed the effectiveness of the governing body.

Main findings

Your school has made a slow start to addressing the points for improvement highlighted in the previous report. Your improvement work is not sufficiently focused and there is not enough evidence that actions taken so far will quickly raise achievement or improve the quality of teaching. For example, you have included the improvement of mathematics and literacy in the action plan but the targets set for pupils in these subjects lack clarity and challenge. In addition, the processes for checking the impact of the plan are not rigorous.

As part of the monitoring visit, Her Majesty's Inspectors and senior leaders observed parts of four lessons. However, some of the school's judgements about the quality of teaching and learning seen were over-generous. Senior leaders did not have high enough expectations of the level of challenge that should be provided to pupils to ensure that they make good progress. It is also clear that pupils' calculation skills are weak.

Staff are receiving a significant amount of support from local authority advisers and are attending training events, senior leaders are also providing staff with information about the quality of their teaching. It is not clear, however, exactly what each teacher needs to do to rapidly improve. A considerable sum of money and time is being used to improve teaching. However, governors do not receive the necessary information about the impact of spending on the quality of teaching to be able to judge if this use of resources is giving value for money.

There are currently five vacancies on the governing body. Governors are committed to ensuring the school improves to good, but the limited numbers mean the workload is high. Governors are implementing the governance review and the local authority is providing focused training. Governors judge that this training will help them hold you and other leaders to account for the school's performance more effectively than in the past.

Ofsted will carry out further visits and provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority is providing a significant amount of support through an improvement partner, teaching and learning advisers for mathematics, literacy and early years, a leading teacher and an advanced skills teacher. It is also providing advice on governance. There is some very early evidence of the impact of their work on improving teaching in upper Key Stage Two and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. To further increase capacity, the local authority should consider partnering this school with a high performing local school.

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

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector