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18 November 2013

Mrs Helen Simpson  
Headteacher  
Ferham Primary School  
Ferham Road  
Rotherham  
South Yorkshire  
S61 1AP

Dear Mrs Simpson

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ferham Primary School, Rotherham**

Following my visit to your school on 15 November 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 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:

- Improve the leadership of mathematics and the strength of the senior leadership team.
- More rigorously evaluate the quality of teaching, taking more robust account of the weaknesses in pupil progress over time.
- Ensure that planned actions are systematically evaluated by their impact on the learning and progress made by pupils new to English and non-mobile pupils.
- Introduce more precise methods for assessing the smaller steps in learning by pupils new to English.
- Improve the efficiency of the governing body.
- With the support of the local authority, draw on the experience and expertise of schools that are managing the impact of new arrivals more successfully, in this or other local authorities.

HMI will provide a list of good or better schools dealing with similar challenges that may be able to offer examples of effective practice.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan, recent data about achievement and the outcomes of monitoring activity were evaluated.

## **Context**

The school has appointed a new leader for Key Stage 2.

## **Main findings**

At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was exceptionally low. Pupils were the equivalent of two years behind pupils nationally and attainment was the lowest for five years. One third of the pupils were below Level 3. The attainment by pupils with English as an additional language was exceptionally low, especially for East European Roma pupils. The proportions making the expected progress from Key Stage 1 in reading and mathematics were well below average.

The school is taking an increasing number of new arrivals from Eastern Europe, many of whom have little English and some with little prior experience of school. There is an exceptionally high turnover of pupils arriving and leaving. For example, five new pupils have joined Year 6 since the beginning of term. In Year 4, over the last year, twelve pupils left, ten arrived and more than a third speak little English. Most classes have a significant minority of pupils with very low attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. The non-mobile pupils made less progress than expected nationally in Years 4, 5 and 6. At Key Stage 2 in particular, teachers are struggling to maintain the progress of the whole class while teaching pupils new to English.

There is a mismatch between the school's judgements about the amount of good teaching and the evidence of weak pupil progress over time. Leaders cannot clearly enough identify the weaknesses in the management and organisation of teaching and assessment that result in slow progress by non-mobile pupils. More effective methods are needed to assess and identify the smaller steps in progress made by pupils new to English.

Leaders have recently begun to increase the range of strategies for monitoring and evaluating the progress of pupils and the quality of their work. Pupil progress meetings are beginning to analyse the progress of individual and groups more thoroughly. Lesson observations identify areas of development and are beginning to focus more sharply on the actions to bring about improvement. The school has rightly added attendance as a priority for improvement in the action plan.

Progress is weaker in mathematics than in reading and writing across the school. The headteacher and governors have identified a weakness in senior leadership and the leadership of mathematics teaching which they are tackling appropriately. A local authority consultant is providing appropriate guidance on how to better match teaching of mathematics to pupils' needs and how to identify the next steps in learning.

The school is working in a challenging context and would benefit from closer collaboration with schools which are achieving greater success in managing new arrivals and teaching and assessing English as an additional language, especially at Key Stage 2. Leaders are outward looking and have looked at primary practice in a number of schools in order to extend their range of strategies.

Governors recognise the issues faced by the school and the challenges in improving pupils' achievement. Attendance by some governors at meetings is poor and the headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body sometimes waste valuable time in preparing for meetings that do not go ahead.

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

### **External support**

Local authority consultants are providing appropriate support for English and mathematics. It has recently provided increased support for teaching English as an additional language. The local authority's headteacher consultant has identified potential links for the school to pursue in this and another local authority.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Services for Rotherham.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**