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28 November 2013

Mrs Jackie Blackburn
Headteacher
Upshire Primary Foundation School
Upshire Road
Upshire
EN9 3PX

Dear Mrs Blackburn

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Upshire Primary Foundation School

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 July 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:

- ensure that the action plan identifies opportunities to measure the impact of actions wherever possible so that leaders and managers know whether the school is on track to become a good school within the time frame. Identify members of the governing body who are to monitor the delivery of the plan
- set yourself more challenging targets for the quality of good and better teaching for the end of the academic year.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, eight pupils from Key Stage 2, five members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your

school action plan. I also visited every classroom with you to look at the quality of teaching and to talk to pupils about their work.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have changed the structure of the senior leadership team by removing one senior teacher from the structure. However, you have strengthened leadership by appointing two middle leaders who are responsible for a range of subject areas.

Main findings

On our visits to lessons, we saw most pupils engaged in their learning and many working at a level which was appropriate for their capabilities. Pupils told me they find teachers' feedback helpful in moving up to the next level of attainment. Staff training is appropriately targeted, and aims to tackle any existing barriers which prevent the school from being 'good'. You have introduced a number of new initiatives which I saw teachers use to make sure work is better suited to pupils' capabilities, including for higher attaining pupils. Teachers are implementing very recently introduced amendments to the marking policy, but it is too early to measure for any impact.

The governing body demonstrates a very good awareness of issues the school needs to tackle. Minutes of meetings show that they are asking you challenging questions.

Your concise school action plan makes sufficient reference to the two main areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. You have identified key times during the year when you plan to check on progress against the plan. However, there is not always enough detail to identify how you plan to measure for success, and the plan does identify who is to monitor the areas for development. Your target for the proportion of teaching judged as good and better by the end of the academic year is not high enough for teaching to be judged as consistently good.

The current group of pupils in Year 6 is larger than that of the previous year, and presents different challenges. Your information for this group of pupils indicates a drop in standards for 2014. While this may not necessarily be due to underachievement, it is nevertheless essential to analyse in depth the reasons behind this, and to challenge yourselves and your pupils to make the greatest possible gains in their learning.

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 is providing 'light touch' support through its half-termly meetings, all of which are focused on key aspects of school improvement. Some of your teachers have attended training provided by the local authority to improve their practice in the classroom, and the whole teaching staff benefitted from a training session in improving the teaching of mathematics provided by the Waltham Abbey Consortium.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] – for academies