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Andrew Fowler
Lyng Primary School
Horton Street
B70 7SQ

Dear Mr Fowler

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lyng Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 December 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 October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- follow up the training needs of governors as identified in the review of governance
- ensure that governors are suitably confident and skilled in monitoring the school's progress and outcomes
- ensure that governors are clear about their statutory duties so that they can contribute effectively to the school's strategic direction.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also considered your evaluation of actions taken to date and your teaching and learning monitoring records.

Context

A deputy headteacher has been appointed to take effect from January 2014. There has been no consultation regarding the school's closure and there has been no change to the school's status since the previous inspection in October 2013.

Main findings

The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have worked quickly to plan the necessary changes in response to the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. The school development plan addresses all of the areas for improvement. Helpfully, the plan records extracts from the main body of the report to provide additional detail to each of the improvement areas. Each improvement activity is linked to clear, measurable outcomes expected of staff and pupils.

Planned actions have a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. All staff have received training to address the immediate priorities in improving teaching and learning. Leaders' expectations of staff are strongly articulated and monitoring activities are planned to check on the introduction and implementation of new practices. Responsibilities for improvements have been sensibly delegated and expectations and accountabilities are clear. New appraisal and monitoring processes have been introduced to reinforce staff's responsibilities in meeting raised expectations of them. All planned activities are spread across a suitable timeframe but no time has been lost in introducing immediate changes where possible.

During the previous inspection, inspectors identified weaknesses in the deployment of support staff. Teaching assistants have received training to inform them of suitable strategies to help support pupils' needs in a variety of settings. Timetables have been revised to enable teachers and teaching assistants to plan lessons and record assessments together.

Leaders have reviewed the purpose and process of setting targets for pupils. Targets have been reduced in number and simplified so that pupils can easily understand them and more confidently evaluate their own progress. Accurate links between targets and National Curriculum levels are at an early stage of development. Parents have attended workshops focusing on how calculation is taught to help them provide support for their children at home.

Leaders have identified links between weak medium-term curriculum planning and gaps in pupils' knowledge. They have reinforced the need to embed pupils' basic mathematical skills, deepen their understanding and accelerate their progress. As a result of effective support and training for staff, more opportunities are now planned for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in practical activities. A whole-day workshop brought mathematics alive for pupils by demonstrating how mathematics applied to each individual. The practical activities that followed required

them to purposefully apply their knowledge, calculate and measure. Leaders' expectations of improved pupils' progress are suitably ambitious.

A local leader of education (LLE) from a neighbouring school has worked with staff on the use of mathematical vocabulary in lessons; improve questioning techniques; and provide opportunities for purposeful talk with partners. Leaders have reviewed the mathematics curriculum and identified opportunities to apply mathematical skills in other subjects. Informal monitoring of lessons disclosed immediate impact in lessons, for example, in a PE lesson where pupils' knowledge of shape informed their positioning for exercises.

Teachers have had the opportunity to observe good and outstanding teaching within the school. Study groups have been set up so that teachers can observe and learn from each other and provide evaluative feedback. Leaders have reviewed and updated their monitoring records of lesson observations and evaluations of teaching. They have identified where previous methods lacked challenge and changes will be implemented from January 2014.

Leaders report that governors are committed to supporting the school. Governance has been recently reviewed and leaders are waiting for the formal feedback which will identify governors' future training needs. The structure of governing body committees will be reviewed to ensure appropriate expertise and accountability. Those governors who attended discussions with HMI understood the need to hold leaders to account for the use of additional funding such as Pupil Premium. However, governors' understanding of their statutory responsibilities is unclear. Their ability to objectively monitor the school's progress in moving to good is at an early stage of development. As a group, they are not yet sufficiently confident or skilled in asking searching questions or interrogating a range of evidence.

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 school improvement advisor (SIA) knows the school well and has been both supportive and responsive to the needs of leaders and managers. The SIA has arranged regular meetings with school leaders and governors to check and monitor the school's progress against its improvement plan. The local authority (LA) will provide evaluative feedback and demonstrate questioning and interrogation of data as a model for governors to learn from and adopt. The LA has provided training for all governors in accessing and analysing data so that they are more able to evaluate the school's performance compared with other schools nationally. Ongoing effective support is also available from the local leaders of education and the cluster group of neighbouring schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway

Her Majesty's Inspector