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Andrew Moore-Stow
Headteacher
Spinney Hill Primary School and Community Centre
Ventnor Street
LE5 5EZ

Dear Mr Moore-Stow

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Spinney Hill Primary School and Community Centre

Following my visit to your school on 29 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 September 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:

- make sure that there is rapid improvement in the quality of the school's governance, so that governors are able to show that they are carrying out their roles and responsibilities effectively
- secure the appointment of a permanent headteacher as soon as is practicable
- improve the quality of teaching so that all groups of pupils make rapid and sustained progress, particularly in Years 3 to 6
- ensure that the monitoring of pupils' progress is used effectively to help those pupils who are underachieving to get back on track
- improve the impact of teachers' marking by making it consistent and giving pupils the time to make the necessary corrections
- make sure that the proposed links with good or better schools lead to a sustained improvement in the quality of teaching.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. We visited all classes to look at the learning that was taking place. I also examined pupils' work in a sample of books. Senior leaders' record of checks on the quality of teaching and the school improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

One teacher is on long-term sick leave. The current headteacher is on a two-term contract which finishes at the end of the Spring term 2014. Prior to the school inspection in September 2013, there were a number of temporary headteacher appointments.

Main findings

The pace of improvement is far too slow. New systems for checking on teaching and pupil progress have recently been introduced but are not making the impact that they should if the school is to have any chance of being judged as 'good' at its next inspection. Your own records about pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics shows that not enough pupils are making better than expected progress, particularly in Years 3 to 6. This reflects some persistent weaknesses in teachers' planning and their failure to meet the different needs of pupils and especially the most-able pupils. Not all teachers are marking pupils' work frequently enough and giving opportunities to them to respond to the advice.

The school's temporary headteacher is raising teachers' expectations about how much more the pupils are capable of achieving. These expectations are in the process of being agreed as part of the performance management of staff. However, relationships between staff and governors are fragile and this is proving to be a barrier to more rapid improvement. A review of governance has been a slow in starting. This has prevented all governors being clear about their roles and responsibilities. The governing body has not been successful in appointing a permanent headteacher, meaning the school lacks a longer term strategic direction and ambition.

Whilst the school improvement plan addresses the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 inspection, it lacks a holistic vision for the future of the school. The plan does not have sufficient, measurable success criteria. For example, there is no indication of what proportion of pupils are going to make better than expected progress. It is not clear how governors will be able to check and evaluate the progress being made towards meeting the targets outlined in the plan.

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

I would like to meet with the full governing body as soon as possible to discuss my concerns about the school's performance arising from this visit.

External support

The school was being helped by support brokered by the local authority prior to the last inspection. Support has since been increased. Staff are receiving training in planning lessons more consistently and making more secure assessments about how well pupils are making progress in their learning. However, the training is not yet making a sufficiently quick enough impact on pupils' achievement. The local authority's external evaluation of progress provides a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Until there is a resolution to the uncertain future leadership of the school, including to the effectiveness of governance, improvements secured so far remain fragile.

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

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector