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Mr Colin Coleman
Headteacher
Linaker Primary School and Children's Centre
Sefton Street
Southport
Merseyside
PR8 5DB

Dear Mr Coleman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Linaker Primary School and Children's Centre, Sefton

Following my visit to your school on 13 December 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 October 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. Leaders and governors should take further action to ensure:

- any analysis of pupils' learning highlights clearly groups which are performing less well than others
- plans to improve the learning of underperforming groups make clear the outcomes expected from actions taken
- observation records of lessons make clear the learning made by pupils
- leaders check the clear guidance they have given to teachers about making sure advice given to pupils is followed through is always put into practice.

Evidence

During this visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and the senior leadership team; five representatives of the governing body, including the Chair; and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plans were evaluated. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) toured the school with the headteacher. HMI also scrutinised a sample of pupils' books and lesson observation records.

Main findings

Leaders have not stood still. A comprehensive plan has been put into place to improve the school. Actions taken to date include analysing pupils' progress in reading and writing, ensuring lesson objectives are written in language pupils can understand, and the providing of opportunities in subsequent lessons for pupils to follow up comments teachers have made when marking work. While such actions are wholly appropriate to the school and reflect well the priorities identified by the inspection of October 2013, some inconsistencies are evident. For example, the analysis of pupils' reading and writing in Key Stage 1, while on the one hand identifying different groups, is not sufficiently sharp to identify underperformance in summer born boys. Consequently, the otherwise clear plans to improve pupils' performance in reading and writing do not give sufficient focus to this group of boys or make clear what gains in learning are to be expected. Likewise, while HMI observed numerous examples of pupils following up comments made by teachers, he also observed a few instances when follow up was not evident. Leaders agree with HMI the checking that these actions are always happening needs to be more robust. Furthermore, while the new lesson observation records articulate what the teacher has done, the impact of teaching in terms of what pupils have learnt as a result is not recorded.

Neither has the governing body rested on its laurels. A national leader of governance has already met with members and an audit of skills undertaken. It is planned that the national leader will support members in modelling effective questioning in meetings. Training has been provided in how to undertake visits to schools. More training is planned to ensure governors have a sound understanding of Raise Online. Governors spoken with outlined clearly their understanding of what the school needs to do to improve.

External support

The local authority knows this school very well and, along with leaders and governors, agree with the judgement of requires improvement. The local authority has rightly brokered the support of a national leader of education from within the area to support and challenge leaders in order that they bring about improvements in, for example, the quality of pupils' learning in reading and writing.

Additional support and challenge from HMI

Ofsted will provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. HMI will visit the school and with senior leaders carry out joint observations of lessons and scrutinise pupils' work. The purpose of HMI's next visit will be to ascertain the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure actions planned are implemented consistently across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector