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Mr Glen Golding
Headteacher
Bishopswood Infant School
Barlows Road
Tadley
Hampshire
RG26 3NA

Dear Mr Golding

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bishopswood Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 4 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 September 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:

- specify how middle leaders' skills in monitoring the school's work will be developed and establish clear criteria for judging the success of improvements.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the acting deputy headteacher, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We carried out brief visits together to lessons in all year

groups. A range of documentation was examined, including the school's plans for improvement.

Main findings

The headteacher has given a strong steer to the school's improvement since the inspection, with a sharp focus on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, particularly in writing. The school's monitoring of teaching is showing an improvement in its overall quality and the inspector's visits to lessons supported this view.

Pupils' progress is being checked regularly to find out if pupils are making enough progress and to determine how approaches will be changed if they are not. Targets are being set, and checked, regularly in the drive to increase the pace of pupils' progress. Recent assessments show writing for pupils in Year 2 is picking up well and, as a result, even more challenging end-of-year targets are being set for those who have already exceeded this term's target.

Senior leaders have taken steps to improve how pupils are taught about letters and the sounds they make (phonics) in their efforts to achieve a more consistent approach. The headteacher is clearly setting high expectations and encouraging teachers to expect more of their pupils when appropriate. On this visit, for example, more able pupils enjoyed tackling a task in science that required them to make their own decisions on how they set up and recorded their investigation.

A programme of training is under way for year leaders, to develop the skills they need to check the school's work effectively. While the school's plan for improvement is sharply focused in most respects, it is not as specific about how these leaders' skills will be developed across a range of monitoring activities. Improving these leaders' influence and impact on pupils' achievement will be an important milestone for the school as it seeks to move towards good.

The governing body is still in the process of establishing its role and impact, as a relatively new federated governing body. Governors have benefited from training and support from the local authority governor services to help them set a strong foundation. Governors are keeping in touch with the school's plans for improvement, through regular meetings, and the headteacher is keeping them well informed on the progress that is being made. Governors were well aware, for example, that some of the targets for writing had been achieved earlier than expected and were, rightly, keen to see these raised further.

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 has worked closely with the headteacher to make sure any support is tailored appropriately to the needs of the school. Training on writing is already making a difference to pupils' achievement. The headteacher has observed lessons jointly with the linked advisor from the local authority to compare views. This has been a useful exercise, to validate judgements. The advisor has also set up opportunities for leaders to benefit from the expertise of other consultants as well as schools where exemplary practice exists. The coaching for year leaders is relevant to their roles and a good start has been made to strengthen this aspect of leadership.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector