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11 December 2013

Mr Julian Ward  
Headteacher  
Larkfield Primary School  
Preston New Road  
Churchtown  
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Merseyside  
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Dear Mr Ward

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Larkfield Primary School, Sefton**

Following my visit to your school on 10 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. The school should take further action to:

- sharpen the action plan to ensure it leads to long term improvement by providing more detail of its later stages.
- make it clear which members of staff and governors are responsible for ensuring that actions have the expected impact.
- ensure that, when judging their achievement, the progress pupils are making is always used in addition to their attainment.

**Evidence**

Meetings were held with: you; subject leaders for literacy and numeracy together with the recently appointed reading co-ordinator; pupils; members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school's improvement action plan and other documents were evaluated. Samples of Year 2, 5 and 6 pupils' work were reviewed.

## **Context**

One teacher is on a long term absence.

## **Main findings**

Teaching has improved. Smaller classes have been created for younger pupils as they learn their letters and sounds and for older pupils in mathematics. These new, smaller classes allow teachers to match the work more closely to children's learning. Pupils say that this is helping them to learn more quickly. The school's latest tracking data indicates increased attainment in all years. A systematic programme of visits to a local outstanding school to observe effective practice has been established, this has already involved the headteacher who now has a clearer view on how to improve teaching. Firm, short-term plans are in place to include subject leaders in the visits.

Monitoring of teaching by leaders has now changed. Shorter lesson observations which focus on pupils' progress, lead to clearer feedback sessions which enable teachers to better understand how they can improve. The recommended improvements are then checked at subsequent observations.

A new reading co-ordinator has been appointed to start in January. Significant investment has been committed to creating a library and enhancing class reading areas.

Attendance has improved. The school's expectation of high attendance has been made more explicit through revised information to parents. Details of the pupils' attendance are posted on the school's website. The improvement this shows encourages even better attendance. Pupils identify that there is a new system and have been helped to understand how important it is for them to be in school.

Leaders and governors have undertaken a swift and honest appraisal of the school following the inspection. There is a willingness to learn and a commitment at all levels, to improve the school. An ambitious plan has been established in response to the inspection. This is sufficiently detailed to shape initial rapid development but this is not the case after the first term. While it is clear who is responsible for actions, the plan lacks detail on who will evaluate their impact. It is not clear how leaders will check that improvement is embedded. Leaders have refined the systems for assessing and tracking the learning of pupils. These are giving teachers a deeper understanding of how to meet the needs of all. However, they do not focus on pupils' progress clearly enough to ensure this continues to increase at the pace needed.

Governors are ensuring that they are in a position to provide robust challenge to the school. They have reorganised their committee meetings so that these fit in with the school's cycle of tracking pupils' performance. The experienced Chair of Governors has made a commitment to continue to lead the school through its next stage of development. Governors are ensuring that their own training and development means that strong leadership continues over the longer term.

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 good support to the school. This has included consultants demonstrating models of effective practice in literacy and numeracy. These have contributed to improved teaching as new approaches are included in teachers' work. Joint working with a local outstanding school and two National Leaders of Education is being effective in improving the leadership of teaching and the school's tracking systems. This learning from others is also building the skills and confidence of staff to enable the school to reduce its need for external support.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby

**Her Majesty's Inspector**