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Miss E Barratt
Headteacher
Caldmore Community Primary School
Carless Street
Walsall
WS1 3RH

Dear Miss Barratt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Caldmore Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 January 2014, 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 and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- use the links established with a good school to ensure information about pupils' achievement is accurate
- frequently check the quality of teaching by talking to pupils about their learning, looking at the work in their books and visiting classrooms
- link judgements about the quality of teaching to pupils' achievement, and hold teachers fully to account for the progress made by their pupils
- give teachers clear guidance on what needs to improve, set short timescales for these improvement to be made and check rigorously that these expectations are helping pupils to learn more effectively.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, three members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the local leader in education to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and subject action plans were evaluated. Other documents were examined: The school's checks on the quality of teaching, information about pupils' current achievement, reports from the local authority partnership review group (PRG) meetings, records of pupils' attendance, the governors' action plan, minutes of governing body meetings and the school's recent survey of parents' views. Short visits were made to lessons to look at pupils learning and the work in their books.

Context

Since the last inspection one teacher has been absent due to illness and the timetable has been changed to reflect the growing size of the school. The school has continued to receive substantial support from the local authority and is working in partnership with a successful school. The headteacher of this support school is a local leader in education (LLE).

Main findings

The actions taken since the last inspection have not had sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and so improvements have been too slow.

There is not enough urgency in action plans. Timescales are often very broad. Some plans lack an expectation that all teachers will follow advice and improve pupils' achievement. It is not made clear how teachers will be held to account for improvements as there are few measures included and planned checks on the quality of learning are infrequent. Consequently pupils' progress in many classes has not improved since the last inspection.

The LLE's school has helped you introduce a new system for keeping a check on pupils' performance. This is still very new. You now have a great deal of information about pupils' performance. You are aware it is important these judgements are accurate, so teachers can use this information to plan appropriately challenging lessons. Leaders and governors are seeking ways to use this information efficiently.

Subject leaders have introduced a number of new approaches to making mathematics and writing more meaningful to pupils. The LLE's school has helped teachers focus on using marking to give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. However, pupils' books show many teachers are not following such advice. This is hindering pupils' progress. This has happened because checks on the quality of teaching are too infrequent and do not focus on how well pupils are

learning. For example, subject leaders have looked at pupils' English and mathematics books and made general comments about what is good and what could be better. Nevertheless, they do not make it clear to teachers what each one must do to improve, or how quickly that should happen. Nor do leaders subsequently check that improvements have been made. This is why the quality of teaching has not improved.

Leaders do not use information about pupils' progress to inform judgements about the quality of teaching. As a result, the view shared with governors about the quality of teaching has been over-generous. Governors' skills are improving. They ask challenging questions and have a better understanding of what information they need to form a picture of the school's effectiveness. For example, those spoken to understand that pupil achievement shows the quality of teaching is weaker than was previously thought to be the case. The action plan, drawn up following the review of governance, has helped governors to act more strategically in setting the school's direction and take responsibility for pupils' achievement.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. During the inspection we agreed that HMI would meet with the full governing body to discuss how to make action plans and monitoring systems sharply focused and effective in improving the quality of teaching. You agreed to send HMI copies of your reports to governors and updated information about pupils' achievement.

External support

The local authority has worked closely with you to provide an appropriate range of training to help teachers plan work that raises pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics. You are being well supported by the LLE and her school. Half-termly PRG meetings with you and governors effectively challenge the impact of this support and accurately identify where progress has been too slow. The local authority review of governance and subsequent action plan has enabled the governing body to work more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector