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Mr. Gary Parkes
Headteacher
Fernhurst Primary School
Haslemere Road
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Dear Mr. Parkes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Fernhurst 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, your staff and governors 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:

- amend the raising attainment plans so that they include specific targets for the proportion of good or better teaching and makes explicit links between the work of middle leaders and the impact that their actions have on raising pupils' achievement
- make more systematic use of the views of parents to evaluate the impact of the school's strategies to help parents to support their children's learning.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, senior and middle leaders, five members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I accompanied you on a learning walk, briefly observing teaching in all year groups. I talked to pupils in lessons and met with a group of 9 pupils from Year 2. I evaluated the school's post Ofsted action plan and annual raising attainment plan. I also scrutinised records of pupil achievement meetings, notes of visits from the local authority, recent minutes of the governing body and records of its monitoring activities in English and mathematics.

Main findings

You, your senior leaders and the governing body have taken effective action to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the recent section 5 inspection. Senior leaders share a clear vision for improvement. Leaders new to the school or new to their role are now more fully involved in leading initiatives that help to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement. Governors are actively involved in the day-to-day work of the school. They understand the school's priorities and ask challenging questions. They contribute to on-going developments in subject areas through their link roles and monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement through regular learning walks and meetings with subject leaders.

The school's action plans are clearly written. The key improvement activities are appropriate and there are measurable targets that enable leaders and members of the governing body to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's actions on raising achievement. However, some targets are not clear enough. You ambitiously expect all teaching to be good or outstanding and hold middle leaders to account for their work, but these targets are not explicit in the raising attainment plans.

Opportunities for middle leaders to analyse information about pupils' achievement are increasing. New initiatives include the forthcoming pupil achievement reviews for mathematics and literacy. Led by subject leaders and attended by governors, these meetings will provide a more coherent whole school picture of achievement and improve developmental feedback for teachers. Several members of staff are about to embark on a masters level course that focuses on developing skills in the teaching of mathematics. In lessons, the role of teaching assistants is more focused and proactive. Systems for identifying their training and development needs and managing their performance have been strengthened. Teaching assistants are encouraged to develop their higher level skills and have opportunities to do so.

The school ensures that parents receive up-to-date information about how they can support their children to learn. Plans are in place to develop existing strategies further, such as through running new workshops targeted at helping dads to read

with their children. Currently, plans to review the impact of this work do not include a systematic evaluation of parental views.

Planning ensures that there is a better balance of adult to child-led activities and greater challenge for children in Reception and Key Stage 1. The needs of different children are identified clearly so that they can receive the right level of support, particularly in relation to their learning about phonics (knowledge of letters and sounds). The quality of phonics teaching is being strengthened across all year groups, with whole staff training taking place very shortly.

Expectations about the quality of presentation and the accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar, have risen. Pupils in the Year 5/6 class told the inspector that teachers reinforce the importance of presentation regularly and that they know how to check their spellings and widen their use of different types of punctuation. An articulate and confident group of more able pupils in Year 2 were excited about the challenging work they have been doing on China. They were very keen to tell the inspector about their personal targets and how teachers help them, through marking or feedback, to improve their work. They said that they are often set more difficult work to do, particularly in mathematics. In general, pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively and this helps to speed up their progress.

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

School leaders and the local authority work together well. You ensure that support is targeted on the areas of greatest need. The link adviser is knowledgeable and visits regularly to support you when evaluating the impact of the school's actions on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. The local authority has also brokered links with successful schools to support on-going improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Additional coaching for leaders is provided by an external consultant. This has helped leaders to develop their skills of strategic leadership. Consequently, leaders at all levels have a much clearer understanding of their role in securing the school's longer term development.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector