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Mr Dean Jones
Headteacher
Chartham Primary School
Shalmsford Street
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Dear Mr Jones

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chartham Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 targets and milestones in the school improvement plan relating to the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress and clarify what it means by accelerated progress
- include specific milestones in the governors' action plan so that it is clear what is expected to be achieved and by when
- use links with other governors, Ofsted's report 'School governance: learning from the best' and attend the Better Governance conference so that governors have a clear understanding of the most effective practice.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and four of your senior leadership team, four members of the governing body and the local authority school improvement adviser to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We walked around the classrooms. I looked at a range of documents that you provided for me which included information about the progress that pupils make in different classes and subjects, records of how teaching is monitored, notes of visits from local authority consultants and the report following an external review of governance. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

There have been no significant changes in the school since the last section 5 inspection. One teacher has left and a newly qualified teacher has joined the school.

Main findings

Since the last inspection you, senior leaders and governors have acted quickly and concentrated on the right priorities. The school's plan for improvement has been amended to include all of the recommendations made by inspectors. The progress that pupils are expected to make in reading, writing and mathematics as they move through the school is explicit. There is some lack of clarity about what is expected if pupils are going to make even better progress to achieve well and precisely what the school means by 'accelerated progress'. Planned actions are relevant and checked regularly to make sure they are making a difference quickly enough. As a result, the school's own records indicate that aspects of teaching and the progress that pupils make are beginning to improve.

A key focus has been on improving reading. The library has been reorganised, opportunities for reading in other subjects are planned for specifically, e-reading books are being used and additional reading support has been provided for pupils who need to catch up or who have gaps in their reading skills. Teachers and teaching assistants have had training in how to develop pupils' ability to make inferences from a text and pupils increasingly use these skills, including in different subjects.

Training for teachers has also included how to improve the quality of marking so that feedback tells pupils clearly what they need to do to move on in their learning. The organisation of English and mathematics lessons in Key Stage 2 has been adjusted. Consequently, pupils now have more time to write at length, read the comments that teachers make and respond to their suggestions for improvement.

The frequency and detail of discussions that you and senior leaders have with each teacher about the progress that their pupils make has been increased. Arrangements to systematically check on the quality of teaching and learning are clear. Senior leaders conduct lesson observations with local authority advisers and headteachers from other local schools to check that strengths and weaknesses in teaching are being identified accurately. Relevant support and training are aimed where they are needed most which is helping teachers to improve their classroom practice.

Governors have taken appropriate steps to improve their understanding of the school's performance and are beginning to use what they know to ask more challenging questions. The external review of governance that was recommended was completed quickly. However, because it did not initially include any interviews with governors, there were concerns that it was not completely accurate. Governors followed this up and have had discussions with the local authority governor support services who conducted the review. As a consequence some useful next steps have been agreed, including an external observation of a governing body meeting. A draft governors' action plan has been drawn up but it lacks any information about what they expect to achieve, by when and how this aligns to the school improvement plan.

Governors have shown that they are eager to strengthen their contribution to the school's improvement journey. They would benefit from reading relevant Ofsted publications, attending external training and making links with other local governing bodies to gain a better understanding of what makes the most effective governance.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I will contact the school in the summer term to discuss what further progress has been made.

External support

The local authority has provided appropriate and timely training and support which is helping to improve teaching and strengthen leadership. You are also using expertise within the school and from other local schools appropriately to share best practice. The school has rightly registered to attend one of Ofsted's Getting to Good seminars and Better mathematics conferences.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Corporate Director of Education, Learning and Skills for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector