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Mr Simon Robinson
Headteacher
Cotmanhay Junior School
Beauvale Drive
Ilkeston
DE7 8RR

Dear Mr Robinson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cotmanhay Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 31 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 December 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also visited every class and spoke to pupils informally about their work. I scrutinised a sample of books from each class. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I checked the single central record.

Context

Since the last inspection, the Chair of the Governing Body has resigned. A new chair has been elected.

Main findings

You responded quickly and positively to address the issues from your recent inspection. Your improvement plan is clear, concise and correctly focuses on the key improvements needed. There is a sense of urgency within the plan that sends a message to all staff that you are determined to be judged good at your next inspection.

You and the deputy headteacher have developed a real sense of purpose amongst your staff, particularly the middle leaders. They share the urgency to improve the outcomes for all pupils quickly. Teaching is now better focused on meeting the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers' planning identifies these groups, but in particular, the most able pupils. These pupils are now being challenged to think deeply and broaden their understanding. As a result, the work in pupils' books clearly demonstrates the high expectations you have for this group of pupils. Consequently, in most classes, standards are rising and their progress is accelerating.

You have set challenging targets for improvements in teaching. You tailor professional development to meet the needs of individual teachers. You and senior leaders diligently check to make sure all teachers are setting a high standard for pupils. Senior leaders regularly challenge their colleagues to improve their work. You hold teachers to account rigorously for the outcomes of their pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving quickly and progress across the school is rising steadily.

You expect pupils to work hard. Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving and they are proud of their work. You are successfully changing the pupils' learning environment. Pupils enjoy learning through the books they read with their teachers. As a result, pupils' writing is beginning to reflect their enjoyment of different types of books.

The governing body continue to provide a high level of support and challenge. The new chair and his team are fully committed to improving outcomes for pupils. Amongst other initiatives, the chair visits the school every day to award pupils who attend by giving them attendance stickers. As a result, attendance has risen significantly within a short period. Governors are visible in school, challenging school leaders to improve their work. They are linked closely to the school improvement plan and take responsibility to report improvements at governing body meetings. As a result, they set clear targets for school improvement, hold senior leaders firmly to account for the performance of teachers and expect all pupils to leave the school well equipped for the next stage in their education.

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 timely and focused support to improve the quality of reading. It has audited the quality of provision and display of books in classrooms. As a result, teachers have been set clear targets for improvement. This has already had an impact and reading has a high profile in school. It has supported the school to write a focused improvement plan which links closely with the support from a local authority consultant and the school advisor. It has also supported senior leaders to check the quality of teaching and offered effective advice on setting targets for improving teachers' performance. It has supported the governing body with further training on interpreting national data.

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

Yours sincerely

Jan Connor
Her Majesty's Inspector