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Mr Ian Goodwin
Tillington Manor Primary School
Young Avenue
Stafford
ST16 1PW

Dear Mr Goodwin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tillington Manor Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 February 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 on 3-4 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. The school should take further action to:

- improve pupils' awareness of the next steps in learning through, the more effective use of pupils work to highlight excellent practice.
- accelerate the progress pupils make in lessons by ensuring they can concentrate more on activities they find challenging, particularly in mathematics.
- monitor more closely the reading being undertaken by pupils and take steps to ensure all groups read more often and more widely.
- involve the Governing Body more in determining the precise targets that can be used by governors to regularly check on the improvements being made in every year group, particularly for those pupils eligible for free school meals

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other leaders, three members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan, information related to the tracking of pupils' progress and the minutes of the governing body meetings were evaluated. Short visits were made to ten lessons to observe teaching

Context

There have been no changes in context since the last Section 5 inspection.

Main findings

You are establishing a more effective approach to the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics). This is an important recognition that too many pupils, particularly those eligible for pupil premium, have not met the national expectations in the recent past. The benefits of this were particularly apparent in the writing and reading seen in the Reception class. The plans you are implementing to plug the gaps in the phonics knowledge of pupils in Key Stage 2 are appropriate. The school does not yet have enough information about the success of the strategies it is using to encourage pupils of all abilities, to read more often and more widely

You are developing an increased awareness of what is required to ensure all pupils make good progress in lessons. It was reassuring to hear that you intend to increase the checks that are made following professional development activity to ensure all staff improve their practice. You have correctly recognised that there are strengths in emphasising the identification of targets for individual pupils and that staff are making some adjustments to their teaching in response to this. Teachers often focus their explanations only on the groups that would benefit from this and some steps are taken to match work to the different abilities. However, there remains a need to establish effective consistent practice; for instance, there are times when progress slows because pupils cannot move quickly enough onto work that is appropriately challenging, particularly in mathematics. Progress in lessons also slows because there is not enough and timely use of pupils' work and other resources, so pupils can more clearly see what they must do to improve. Pupils are not always clear about what they must do to improve their work, in part because they are not sufficiently involved in identifying for themselves the improvements they need to make.

The leaders responsible for English, mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage spoke confidently about the commitment all staff have to becoming good teachers. These leaders are aware of the strengths and weakness in their areas of responsibility; for instance the need to use all subjects to better promote problem-

solving in mathematics and ensuring more staff build effectively on the good practice that is evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Improvement plans address all the issues identified at the section 5 inspection and contain some indicators that can be used to check the progress being made improving the school. The Governing Body is using performance management well to hold senior leaders to account. Crucially, the Governing Body is aware of the further improvements it needs to make so that it can be even more effective. Governors have a good understanding of the how well the school is doing at Year 2 and Year 6 compared to schools nationally. However, they are not as confident about judging performance in other year groups, particularly for those eligible for pupil premium funding.

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 school is working with other local schools so that it has increased access to very good and outstanding practice elsewhere. The local authority has organised appropriate consultant support for mathematics and has also identified a further partner school. It would be helpful if the support from the partner school could focus on further improving the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation activity. The local authority has usefully established regular opportunities to review the progress the school is making. It has agreed to keep HMI informed about the outcomes of these reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector