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Kathryn Sugars
Headteacher
Foley Park Primary School and Nursery
Northumberland Avenue
Kidderminster
DY11 7AW

Dear Mrs Sugars

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Foley Park Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 5 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 in November 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 inspection.

The school should take further action to:

- arrange for an external review of governance to be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved
- take greater account of the evidence in pupils' books when judging the quality of teaching
- examine pupils' books much more frequently and use these checks to give teachers clear expectations for improvement that are followed up quickly to ensure these actions have been carried out.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Other documents were scrutinized: your checks on the quality of teaching and records of your monitoring of pupils' work. Short visits were made to each classroom to talk to pupils and to look at the work in their books.

Context

The acting deputy headteacher at the time of the section 5 inspection is now a full-time class teacher and has assumed responsibility for assessment throughout the school. Another teacher within the school has been appointed deputy headteacher and has taken up her post. Teachers responsible for overseeing English and mathematics now have a half-day each week to carry out their responsibilities. Two parent governors have joined the governing body. The school has purchased additional support from an education welfare officer and is in discussion with a National Leader in Education (NLE) about the possibility of receiving support from her school.

Main findings

Significant turbulence in staffing during the period immediately following the section 5 inspection resulted in little improvement last term. Since January, you and your newly appointed deputy headteacher have instigated a more urgent drive to improve. However, time has been wasted and so there is much ground to catch up. You have written an improvement plan, which shows the key actions the school will take to tackle the areas for improvement identified in November. This plan shows you are ambitious for the school, but does not provide clear enough measures to help you and governors check each term if the school is improving as quickly as you expect.

Your new senior leadership team has introduced a range of strategies aimed at improving the quality of teaching. These are helping teachers to focus on what they need to do to improve. You check the quality of teaching on a weekly basis by visiting classrooms and give teachers advice based on what you see. You also check if teachers follow this advice on your next visit. This has led to some improvement in the quality of teaching, particularly for those teachers who reflect deeply upon what you say and actively look for ways to improve. This is most notable in Key Stage 1. However, improvement is limited because some teachers have failed to respond as well as others to your expectations. This has happened because your checks on the quality of teaching occur on the same day each week and do not take into account work in pupils' books, which shows what teaching is more typically like.

You have, rightly, focused on improving the contribution to improvement made by teachers responsible for English and mathematics. You have ensured these teachers now have more time to carry out their role. As a result, they are better placed to support you in gathering information about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in the subject for which they are responsible. This also gives them more time to support other teachers to improve the way they teach some aspects of English and mathematics. Thanks to the support given, teachers are now more confident in planning opportunities for pupils to use their knowledge of number beyond mathematics lessons. Additionally, the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) has improved, so pupils are able to use this knowledge more effectively to help them read and spell new words. However, there are limitations to the impact of these leaders because some lack confidence in the extent to which they can support colleagues in accelerating pupils' progress as much as is needed to ensure achievement becomes good.

The governors spoken to during this inspection demonstrated a strong commitment for the school to improve. They challenge you about aspects of the school's work, including achievement for individual pupils. Since the inspection, governors have used a checklist to help them identify key actions to help them be more effective. They know that improvement needs to be much quicker and understand that an external view would benefit the governing body in its drive to move forwards.

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, it was agreed that you will send HMI copies of your reports to the governing body and updated information about pupils' achievement each term.

External support

The recently appointed local authority school improvement adviser has provided an increased level of challenge, particularly with regard to the achievement of different groups of pupils. His support to governors has given greater clarity to the process of managing your performance as headteacher. The local authority challenges you, appropriately, to demonstrate evidence of improvement each half term at Project Board meetings. Support from a learning and teaching adviser, aimed at improving progress in writing at Key Stage 1, is so newly established that it is not yet possible to judge impact. Training given to governors has deepened their awareness of what kind of information they require to form an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The local authority has identified, correctly, that additional support is needed to ensure the rate of improvement increases. You are in discussion with an NLE about what support you might access from her school.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector