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Elizabeth Gallagher
Headteacher
Elms Farm Community Primary School
Dorncliffe Avenue
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Dear Mrs Gallagher

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Elms Farm Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 2014 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act, 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, and the headteacher of a local National Teaching School. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. The single central record was checked.

Context

Leadership has been strengthened by the appointment of a permanent deputy headteacher. A new teacher has been appointed to teach in Year 6. The school is currently seeking to appoint a subject leader for mathematics. The school is in the very early stages of considering academy status.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior staff have responded positively to the previous inspection. The newly established senior leadership team is working well together and with a clear sense of

direction. There is a strong determination to ensure that attainment improves for all pupils. Working closely with the local authority, teaching and learning have been fully reviewed, and support has been provided to eliminate weaknesses in teaching and strengthen existing good practice.

The school improvement plan is detailed and provides a clear and effective programme for improving teaching. It identifies a range of helpful and practical measures for raising standards in English and mathematics, although the section on cross-curricular literacy lacks detail. Success criteria are often well chosen and linked to specific outcomes for pupils. The plan contributes well to school improvement but would be improved by adding a specific focus on strategies for improving the performance of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and a more detailed section on governance.

The governing body is highly supportive of the school and keen to be more involved in the decisions taken. The newly appointed Chair of the Governing Body meets the headteacher on a weekly basis and reports back on meetings formally to the rest of the governors. She was involved in producing the school improvement plan. The school has commissioned a review of governance which is due to take place next week. The governing body should use the review to clarify its roles and improve communication.

The local authority's statement of action is thorough and closely matched to the priorities in the inspection report. It complements the school's improvement plan well. It identifies how support will be provided by a local National Teaching School. A monitoring 'task force' has been established to keep a regular eye on progress. Success criteria in the plan are generally appropriate, although the time scale for measuring improvements is sometimes too vague.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Jarrett
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers match work in lessons to pupils' individual needs, especially to extend learning for more-able pupils
 - pupils are given enough time to get on with activities or work by themselves
 - teachers question pupils skilfully to check how well they are doing in lessons and make adjustments to teaching when necessary.

- Improve progress in reading, writing and mathematics for all groups of pupils by giving them:
 - regular opportunities to use and apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills in a range of subjects
 - time to respond to comments in teachers' marking so that they can understand how to improve their work.

- Ensure leaders and governors accelerate the pace of improvement by:
 - using information from checks on teaching more rigorously to improve the quality of teaching, with a greater emphasis on its impact on learning and progress
 - giving governors the training they need to fully understand performance data and challenge leaders over the results
 - analysing in detail the impact of pupil premium spending on eligible pupils' progress and making adjustments where needed as a result.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.