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Mrs W Todd
Interim Headteacher
Ottershaw CofE Junior School
Fletcher Road
Chertsey
KT16 0JY

Dear Mrs Todd

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ottershaw CofE Junior School

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 of my visit. 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.

Ottershaw Church of England Junior School is federated with Ottershaw Church of England Infant School. There is one governing body, one interim headteacher, one deputy headteacher and one inclusion leader for both schools. Subject leaders lead in their areas of responsibility across both schools. As a result, the monitoring visits for both schools were carried out in parallel. I have written one letter for each of the schools. Some aspects are explained in both letters, but the areas for improvement identified in the schools' S5 inspection report are focused on separately in each letter.

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:

- agree the leadership and management structure of the school and ensure all staff with leadership functions have clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- ensure appraisal arrangement of all staff are robust in order to increase their accountability

- include milestones relating to pupils' attainment and progress for all groups of pupils in every year group in the school development plan and link expected outcomes to national expectations in Year 6.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the inclusion leader six members of the Governing Body, including the Chair of Governors and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We walked around all classrooms and met staff and pupils during lessons. I briefed staff and met with a group of pupils to gauge their views on the improvements that are being made. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated. I considered a range of information, including pupils' progress data for the current year and the last academic year.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, in the autumn term, the headteacher retired at the end of December 2013. You took up your interim headship post in January 2014; this interim arrangement is due to end in July 2014. Governors have appointed a substantive headteacher who is due to take up the headteacher post in September 2014. One teacher left at the end of December 2013. There is a newly appointed permanent teacher in the Year 4. One teacher returned to the school in January 2014 following a period of long-term sick leave. The school business manager also left the school in December 2013. At present this post is vacant. The local authority is providing business support to the school.

Main findings

There was a mixed response from senior leaders and members of the governing body following the inspection judgement. As a result, the actions taken to improve the school were slow to get started. Following the inspection, the local authority took action to strengthen the leadership of the governing body and an additional skills governor, who had been appointed as a governor in the summer term, was elected as the Chair of Governors. The governing body were aware that information was not being provided in a timely manner which hampered their effectiveness. Although the school improvement plan was initially amended, this was not widely shared with staff. Improvements were therefore limited.

Since January 2014, there is a renewed energy to improve the school. A new school improvement plan has been devised which has been shared with staff and governors. Swift action is being taken to address weaknesses in teaching and develop the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders. Governors have a better understanding of the work of the school because the information they receive is clear, judicious and appropriate. There is a palpable sense of urgency conveyed by governors and senior leaders to rapidly improve the school.

A new system to track the attainment and progress of all pupils has been introduced. This clarifies the progress pupils are making from their starting points in the infant school. As a result, teachers have a better understanding of those pupils who are underachieving. Teachers are beginning to evaluate the progress of pupils and through the support of senior leaders, devise strategies and support to accelerate the progress of underachieving pupils. The expected levels of attainment and progress now need to be included in the school development plan to ensure governors are able to quickly identify underachievement and challenge school leaders and teachers more effectively.

Pupils are positive about the improvements in their learning. They report that they are challenged more and say lessons are more enjoyable because they are provided with increased opportunities to be actively involved in their learning. Recently slight changes to the timings of assemblies and lessons have increased their time to learn during the school day. Pupils also say that they are given more time to respond to marking comments. Older pupils have some understanding of the levels that are working towards. Most pupils know the targets they are working to achieve.

Since January, much has been done to ensure leadership responsibilities are shared across both schools. There is a clarity of purpose. Nevertheless, the mandatory teacher appraisal arrangements are at an early stage of development. The interim headteacher has introduced a clear structure for assessing the performance of teachers. Lesson observations have identified strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The interim headteacher has provided additional support where weak teaching has been identified.

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 had identified concerns about the school's capacity to improve prior to the inspection and additional support was in place. This included a review of governance. Good support has been provided to strengthen the governing body and to secure interim and substantive headteachers. In addition, literacy and numeracy consultants are providing guidance and support to subject leaders and teachers to improve planning and teaching. Financial and business support is being effectively provided.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Surrey and the Diocese of Guildford.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector