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Mrs Jan Thomas
Headteacher
Grange Junior School
Grange Drive
Swindon
SN3 4JY

Dear Mrs Thomas

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Grange Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 28 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 January 2014. 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:

- ensure the school action plan includes clearer measureable criteria to enable progress against the priorities to be measured precisely
- ensure teachers build into their mathematics planning further opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their understanding of effective calculation strategies.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, the senior leadership team and a number of middle leaders to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. In addition, I held a meeting

with a representative of the local authority and toured the school with you visiting a number of lessons. I also evaluated the school's action plan drawn up following the inspection.

Main findings

The school's action plan is effectively linked to the recommendations in the inspection report. Priorities for improvement are very detailed, key personnel identified, timescales clear and success criteria outlined. However, although there are stated review dates and specific milestones for each priority, criteria are not always precise enough to enable success to be measured which limits effective evaluation.

Under your strong leadership, the school has incorporated the recommendations from the last inspection into the overall improvement programme implemented since the school federated with the partner infant school. There is a strong focus on improving the outcomes for pupils by developing the quality of teaching across the school. This has involved improving the feedback given to pupils by teachers and a new marking policy has been implemented across the school. Pupils can explain the system and what they need to do to improve their work. An important aspect of this is the development of 'dialogue time' at the beginning of lessons where pupils are given time to review feedback from teachers and follow the guidance given. There were some compelling examples of improved aspects of writing seen in books scrutinised during the inspection. Teachers are systematically held accountable for the progress of the pupils in their classes through a cycle of meetings and differentiated support is available following monitoring by senior leaders.

The school has implemented a new calculation policy based on consultation with staff and in-service work. This has helped to develop teachers' knowledge of the progression in pupils' understanding of calculation. The work is enhanced by the phase leader for Y2, Y3 and Y4 supporting transition from the partner infant school. Since the inspection, the monitoring by senior leaders has focused on mathematics and evidence from observations show teachers are more confident in teaching calculation strategies. Furthermore, the introduction of 'working walls' as a resource for numeracy in classrooms has helped pupils to use and apply their understanding. However, school evidence shows that there is scope for teachers to develop more opportunities for pupils to be able to share and develop their understanding of effective calculation strategies in, for example, problem solving activities.

School senior and middle leaders are effectively involved in monitoring and supporting teachers. There is a clear focus on improving the quality of learning by pupils and this is used as the basis for judging teaching. A system of support and challenge is available for teaching staff and this is securely linked to pupil progress

meetings and the performance management cycle. The support for teachers is proportionate and personalised to meet individual needs.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has ensured that it is using the opportunities offered by the local authority to support improvements. There has also been the effective involvement of a consultant to support the improvements in mathematics teaching across both schools in the federation.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner

Her Majesty's Inspector