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Huda Aslam
Ladypool Primary School
Stratford Road
Sparkbrook
Birmingham
B11 1QT

Dear Mrs Aslam

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ladypool Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 March 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority and the Greet Teaching School Alliance to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan, self-evaluation and impact report were evaluated. You and I informally observed lessons where pupils were learning about letters and the sounds they make (phonics).

Context

Since the last inspection in January 2014 one of the deputy head teachers has left.

Main findings

You are well aware of what support is needed and where it must be targeted. Since your appointment in September 2013, you identified significant areas of weakness and lost no time in introducing methods to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards. You have introduced checks on the quality of teaching to inform the management of their performance. With other senior leaders you have introduced methods of keeping pupils' progress and achievement under review and more accurately tracking their progress; improved the feedback given to pupils in teachers' marking of their work; and provided training for teachers in areas of development seen as priorities.

Staff have received training in the assessment of pupils' achievements and tracking their progress. Staff are more aware of the varying performance between different groups of pupils. Teachers are increasingly aware of their accountabilities in meeting pupils' needs and ensuring their progress. However, not all staff appreciate the required urgency to bring about the necessary changes.

You, members of the senior leadership team and phase leaders, now regularly check aspects of pupils' work; provide oral and written feedback to teachers; and check that agreed improvements have been implemented. Managers report that you have inspired staff by organising visits for them to observe good teaching. As a consequence, managers are better able to evaluate the work of others, provide balanced and accurate feedback and insist on shared expectations. Governors too are increasingly aware of their role in holding staff at all levels to account for bringing about effective improvement.

You have made significant changes to the learning environment to ensure that available resources are utilised and best use is made of the space available to teach pupils in small groups. The implementation of the new behaviour policy helps to identify and reward pupils' positive behaviour. It is also clear about sanctions when behaviour falls short of acceptable standards.

Your plans for school improvement include all areas identified in the previous section 5 inspection. The aspect related to mathematics is not sufficiently explicit in terms of the actions which need to be taken to raise standards quickly and improve the quality of teaching. The people responsible and accountable for particular actions are not consistently identified.

Some staff remain in a state of denial about the necessity for improvement and they are reluctant to face the facts. Pupils' attainment is low because teachers have not taught them to the standard necessary to secure their success. You are aware of the necessity to accelerate pupils' rates of progress. You have rightly challenged teaching where it is inadequate or requires improvement. You are strongly focused on school improvement. The local authority and representative of the Teaching Alliance report that they believe you have the ability to take staff with you on this journey. They also recognise your determination to follow up, tackle and challenge underperformance wherever it persists.

Your recent checks reveal that teachers' assessments are beginning to inform lesson plans. The quality of marking has improved and pupils' work is pitched more accurately to their ages and abilities. You have also seen improvements in the quantity and quality of work produced by pupils as well as the rates of progress they make. Regular homework is provided and parents are aware of the routines and how they can help. Teachers are more confident in teaching letters and the sounds they make. Middle managers are increasingly involved in monitoring activities and able to provide more accurate feedback. Their ability to provide challenging feedback where underperformance is identified is at an early stage of development. Nevertheless, records show that some teachers have taken on advice and the quality of their teaching has improved.

Governors are increasingly involved and aware of the improvements needed. They have agreed how they will work with you to finalise the improvement plans. They are aware of which pupils fall behind and the planned support to bring about speedy progress. They are not afraid to ask challenging questions. They appreciate the sense of urgency necessary to improve.

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 has successfully commissioned support from the Greet Teaching Alliance. Representatives of the local authority and the Teaching Alliance know the school well and have worked closely with the school in the past. As a consequence, they are helpfully aware of areas of stubborn weakness but they are able to provide training, support, coaching and challenge. Representatives report that you have speedily planned the necessary actions and that you never show signs of complacency. The local authority will convene half-termly meetings including you, the Chair of the Governing Body and Alliance representatives to review the school's progress against the areas for improvement. In addition, the local authority will evaluate the school's success in half-termly meetings. Although governance was not a cause of concern at the previous inspection, a National Leader of Governance is able to provide on-going support to keep governors up to date with their statutory duties and best practice. A review of the school's use of pupil premium is planned for the near future.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for insert local authority name and as below.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway
Her Majesty's Inspector