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Gayle Bacon
Headteacher
Woodbridge Junior School
Grange Street
Alfreton
DE55 7JA

Dear Mrs Bacon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodbridge Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 21 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. The school should take further action to:

- identify more opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in other subjects
- help governors become more effective in their roles, especially when visiting the school
- write a summary improvement plan which is accessible to all

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, two representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your school improvement plan. You took me on a tour of the school and we made brief visits to a range of classes.

Main findings

You, your members of staff and your governors have responded positively to the findings of your recent inspection.

Your revised school improvement plan is comprehensive and clearly sets out what you plan to do. You should create a summary of this detailed document to make it more accessible to all those involved in improving the school, including governors and teaching assistants.

Improving the effectiveness of grammar teaching is now a focus. All teachers are required to include the teaching of grammar in their lesson planning, and staff must address common grammatical and spelling errors when marking work.

Shortly after your inspection, you sent a letter and a handwriting template to all parents emphasising the importance of neat presentation of written work, and you informed them that unacceptable work would have to be re-done. Pupils have been set higher expectations in this regard. The presentation of written work has improved as a result.

Your literacy coordinator is helping the school's teaching assistants to improve their teaching of phonics. This is beginning to have a positive effect but it is too early to judge its long-term impact.

While you have amended your marking policy slightly, a bigger concern at the time of your inspection was that teachers were not following the policy consistently. Comprehensive and formative marking are now being carried out regularly and improvements in this regard are already evident.

All teachers have been directed to offer pupils at least 10 minutes of mental mathematics a day, and to set starter activities involving mental calculation. Your monitoring shows that this is taking place but it is too early to judge any impact at present. Tests have identified multiplication as a necessary area of focus and this is being addressed through revised planning.

You have begun to create opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum. This requires further development, as does the setting of appropriately challenging tasks for more-able pupils. A local authority mathematics consultant has been helping your teachers address these aspects.

You underwent training to improve your monitoring and evaluation practice. This has helped you become more focused in what you are specifically looking for. You have increased the frequency of work scrutiny. You and your deputy headteacher currently see all pupils' books on a weekly basis to ensure that your directions are being carried out effectively, and that pupils are making improved progress.

The governing body is committed to helping the school improve. Both of your governance committees have met since your inspection, and governors have contributed to a revised school improvement plan. An additional meeting of the full governing body has been arranged with a view to undertaking a skills audit. Since your inspection, three governors have visited the school and conducted learning walks; while governors are committed to helping the school improve, they require more direction on what to look for during their visits.

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 representative understands the school's priorities for improvement. She has extended the level of support she will offer in terms of lesson observations, work scrutiny and data analysis. A local authority mathematics consultant has worked with the school's staff and this had led to some improvements in teaching. A phonics consultant has been arranged and will begin work at the school next month.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the governing body, and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector