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Ms Jo Klimek
Holne Chase Primary School
Buckingham Road
Milton Keynes
MK3 5HP

Dear Ms Klimek

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holne Chase Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 December 2013. 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:

- sharpen the action plan so it includes measurable outcomes for pupils and demonstrates clearly who is accountable for monitoring and evaluating how well the outcomes for pupils are met
- ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate, particularly in mathematics
- adapt the action plan to address more fully the slow progress in mathematics of some year groups.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, the governing body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the

school's action plan. In addition, I scrutinised other school documentation including records of leaders' monitoring activity. I joined you on a tour of the school and visited every year group, taking the opportunity to talk to pupils about their learning.

Context

One class teacher has left and been replaced very recently. At the time of this monitoring inspection, two appointments to fill two other vacancies were made. A member of the teaching staff has been promoted to the role of assistant headteacher.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, leaders have sensibly re-written the improvement plan to ensure that actions are appropriate to the areas requiring improvement, and that it is clear who leads on what. It is welcome that leaders are already monitoring the impact of actions taken. While the plan makes it clear who is responsible for taking action, it is not clear enough what the intended impact is on outcomes for pupils. This makes it difficult checking that actions are making the difference where it matters.

In judging the quality of teaching, leaders are making more use of a variety of evidence, including scrutiny of pupils' work, learning walks and lesson observations. Teachers are beginning to receive better feedback on their work, with leaders more frequently checking what teachers had done to address their targets. Occasionally, feedback lacks sufficient focus on pupils' learning and the progress they are making.

The school has begun to gather the views of pupils more efficiently. During a learning walk, pupils were able to describe succinctly what they were doing; pupils were engaged in the tasks expected of them and they were confidently able to describe the purpose of their work. In some classes, there was evidence of display work that supported pupils' learning, but not in all.

Teaching assistants have received some effective training since the last inspection. Training has not yet been personalised to meet individual needs and leaders recognise that a more bespoke approach is now required to develop teaching assistants' skills.

Leaders now gather more information on the attainment and progress of pupils. They have correctly identified that variations in progress across different year groups remain, particularly in mathematics. They now need to ensure teachers' assessments of pupils' progress in mathematics are accurate, as they are not sure this is currently the case. Action planning should be adapted specifically to address slow progress in mathematics in some year groups.

Leaders are able to illustrate from their own records, that attainment is rising, most notably at Key Stage 2. Teachers' assessments indicate that, for example, pupils in Year 6 are now attaining expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the headteacher acknowledges that teachers' assessments are not always accurate, and leaders are working to improve this.

The recently appointed Chair of the Governing Body brings a clear vision for the school and is ambitious for its future. Governors are keen to gain accreditation through the Governor Mark as a framework to measure their own effectiveness. A clear programme of training has been established which focuses well upon developing effective questioning skills and understanding of the school's pupil performance data. This approach is strengthened by governors' wise use of external consultancy support. Governors are not content simply to look at rates of progress and levels of attainment; they have correctly sought additional information to help check pupils' achievement against national figures. They have organised training to help them achieve this and are determined to improve their skills in order to challenge leaders more effectively.

Governors have started a cycle of monitoring that includes focussed learning walks to gather evidence first hand, although it is unclear what happens as a result. While an external review is planned, as suggested at the last inspection, this has not yet taken place. Governors agree that this should happen no later than the first half of the summer term.

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 linked officer is providing effective support to leaders and has assisted with drafting the school's action plan. A representative from the local authority visits the school at suitably regular intervals. In addition, effective support has been brokered by the local authority from a local teaching school (a school where teaching has been judged outstanding by Ofsted). The school has secured extra funding from the local authority to improve information and communications technology provision. It is too early to assess the impact of this.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector