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Mr Terrance Nairne
Headteacher
Downsell Primary School
134-136 Downsell Road
Waltham Forest
London
E15 2BS

Dear Mr Nairne

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Downsell Primary 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 November 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:

- build on the changes to the school's assessment procedures to further develop the understanding of pupil progress within the school
- give pupils more opportunities to reflect upon their work and then improve it.
- make sure that the school's self-evaluation reflects the growing understanding of teaching and learning and pupils' progress within the school.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body with two other governors and a

representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also conducted a short tour of the school with senior leaders.

Context

There have been a number of staffing changes since the inspection. One member of staff is currently on maternity leave and this temporary vacancy is being covered by an existing permanent member of staff. Another teacher has left the school and has been replaced with a permanent teacher.

The role of three teaching assistants has been reviewed and the school has appointed two additional teaching assistants to support vulnerable pupils.

Main findings

The post-Ofsted action plan is suitably focused on the areas identified for improvement. It shows a clear understanding of the immediate actions required to improve pupils' learning for the school. The action plan has defined the steps required to secure the expected outcomes. These are focused on improving the learning for all pupils and progress being checked regularly and shared with staff and governors.

The school has reviewed its assessment procedures. Staff now collect data about pupils' progress on a half-termly basis. Pupils' assessed work is moderated both internally, and externally in partnership with local schools. This added level of rigour allows for the school to use this data to inform practice in the classroom and identify pupils for whom extra support is needed.

Teachers plan with a greater understanding of pupils' abilities within their classrooms. As a result of this, a range of differentiated tasks take place in lessons.. To support these activities, teaching assistants are now involved more fully in supporting the learning of groups of pupils and are directly contributing to their improving progress.

A set of non-negotiable professional expectations for all staff has been shared throughout the school, by you. Teachers have responded to this challenge and areas for development such as the marking of pupil's books and planning for learning are showing how teachers can rapidly improve the learning experience for pupils.

You are ensuring that teachers teach to a consistently good or better standard by using both senior and middle leaders to monitor the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. This is a development in the role of middle leaders and has

been enhanced by an emphasis on leaders coaching and developing other teachers within the school. Middle leaders now lead on sharing and embedding the best practice within the school.

Professional development and training opportunities have been increased, with the support of the local authority. These include an induction and development programme for newly qualified teachers, thereby allowing for a greater range of support for new staff.

The increased scrutiny of pupils' learning and teaching within the school is carefully linked to these new initiatives. Senior and middle leaders are now more aware of priorities for staff development. Careful targeting of training is beginning to impact on pupils' outcomes.

An external review of governance is under way and will be completed by the end of March. Governors are clear in their desire to support further improvements within the school and supportive of both the review and a possible reconstitution of the governing body if necessary. Individual governors are undertaking training to develop their contribution, however, it is clear that the governing body needs to increase the skills currently held within it.

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

You have actively sought the support of the local authority in seeking to improve the school. It is clear that they have made a significant contribution to the improvement seen so far. Your partnership with Davies Lane School and the link through this school to the Tollgate teaching alliance is allowing for teachers from the school to experience a greater range of development activities than otherwise. This has also allowed the school to develop another opportunity for the external moderation of pupils' work.

You have further developed the established link with Newport School. This supports external moderation and staff development. Taken together, these links are providing a better level of professional development and a more rigorous system of moderation.

The local authority regularly visits the school with a focus on developing teaching and learning, and has provided support for governors and the review of governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Kevin Flanagan
Her Majesty's Inspector