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Mrs Alison Armstrong
Headteacher
Burnham Copse Primary School
New Church Road
Tadley
RG26 4HN

Dear Mrs Armstrong

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Burnham Copse Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 April 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:

- share a clear vision with teachers about the features of good teaching and learning, and check that this is evident in all classrooms
- check and develop teachers' subject knowledge about mathematics so that all are confident to provide imaginative and challenging investigations and problem solving activities for all their pupils
- sharpen the focus of governors' activities during their visits to the school, so these are used to check the information provided in reports from school leaders.

The local authority should take further action to:

- provide a clear external view of strengths and weaknesses in teaching.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and a representative from the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plan together with other documentation including the recent, external review of governance and minutes of the governing body. I toured the school and visited all the classrooms.

Context

At the time of the section 5 inspection, you were the acting headteacher. Since then you have been appointed permanently.

Main findings

Since the inspection you have revised the school's improvement plan. This is now well matched to the areas for improvement which were identified, with a structure that makes it easy to see what must be done, by whom and when. You have included information about how senior leaders and governors will check that each aspect of the plan is completed and that the action taken is effective. However these checks are limited to reports and do not include gathering first hand evidence from activities such as visits to classrooms, looking at exercise books or talking with pupils.

You have a clear and rational view, supported by the governing body, about how subject leadership and the leadership of each age group in the school can be developed as pupil numbers continue to rise. In the interim, you and the deputy headteacher are rightly leading English and mathematics in order to secure rapid improvement.

The deputy headteacher has promoted opportunities for pupils to use mathematical skills to solve problems and conduct investigations in other subjects, and I saw some evidence of this around the school and in classrooms during my tour. Some of these activities appeared limited in their scope, and it will be important to ensure that all teachers have the subject knowledge they need in order to devise exciting and challenging mathematical activities for all pupils, including the most able.

You have introduced a new format for recording lesson observations, designed to check how well all groups of pupils are learning. However, the form involves recording a high level of detail and this is likely to take a great deal of the observer's attention and therefore limit how helpful their feedback to the teacher will be.

You have introduced a system for pupils to know and reflect on their own progress targets. This is helping and, as a result, the pupils I asked were able to tell me about their targets and the system, and about how well they feel they are doing.

Immediately after the inspection the governors established a 'Requires Improvement Group' to check and measure the school's progress. The Chair of the Governing Body has been astute in ensuring that this group includes new governors as well as those with more experience, so that skills and knowledge develop quickly. The governing body commissioned an external review of governance shortly after the inspection and has already completed training about monitoring pupil progress, a key recommendation of the report.

External support

The governing body values the support provided by the local authority since the inspection. This has included the clear and focused external review of governance and training about how pupils' progress is recorded and analysed. To support the headteacher, the local authority has arranged for a mentor who is more experienced and who leads a school which has already improved to be good. It would be useful for the local authority to provide a clear, external view about the quality of teaching, to support the headteacher in making sure that this is consistently good or better in every classroom, as soon as possible.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector