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Bill Aylett
Headteacher
Montgomery Junior School, Colchester
Baronswood Way
Colchester
CO2 9QG

Dear Mr Aylett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Montgomery Junior School, Colchester

Following my visit to your school on 29 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 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:

- Review the timeline for teaching to be consistently good or better and specify the targets for pupils exceeding expected progress.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and the senior leadership team. I met three governors and spoke to the local authority Standards and Excellence Commissioner. I evaluated the school's post-Ofsted action plan, looked at recent progress data and read a range of monitoring documentation. We carried out brief visits to lessons and spoke to teachers and pupils about their work.

Context

A Year 5 teacher, also subject leader for literacy, left the school at Easter. You reviewed staff deployment to ensure continuity for pupils and the special needs coordinator is teaching this class until the end of the Summer term. Three new members of staff will join the school in September 2014.

Main findings

Soon after the inspection, with the timely support of governors, you swiftly took action to address weaknesses. The strategies used to improve the leadership and teaching of mathematics and phonics are particularly effective. Consequently, the school is making rapid progress towards becoming a good school. The school's improvement planning is clearly focused on accelerating pupils' progress. Targets to improve the quality of teaching and for pupils to make expected progress are precise, although the timeline for teaching to be consistently good or better lacks urgency. You also need to specify the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress to reflect your key priority of accelerating progress for more able pupils. You have good systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching and, with the support of senior leaders, you frequently check that pupils' learning and outcomes are being raised. As we visited classes, I noted that consistent approaches are now used to check that pupils know what they need to do to improve through your *'Think Pink'* strategy and *'Steps to Success'*. These initiatives are already improving standards in writing and mathematics. The identified issue of slower progress for more able pupils and girls in mathematics is being addressed very well. Current data and predicted 2014 results appear stronger than in previous years.

Governors took quick action to agree a post-Ofsted monitoring plan with the clear agenda of checking progress against the key issues identified at the inspection. They are keen to refine their skills further to help them gather objective evidence of improvements, independently of your senior leadership team. For this purpose, they are commissioning a review of governance to ensure that they have the necessary expertise to hold the school to account.

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 Standards and Excellence Commissioner provides effective support to the school. This includes signposting staff to best practice, identifying relevant courses to improve the quality of teaching and reviewing the effectiveness of your plans. The work of local authority mathematics consultant is having a positive impact on classroom practice, such as better sequencing of activities to develop pupils' mathematical skills, more effective use of working walls and staff paying careful attention to the timing of additional intervention to ensure that the learning of pupils receiving support is not disrupted. The consultant's notes of visits provide specific action points for subject leaders to drive improvement in mathematics. Links with other schools encourage staff to reflect on their practice, for

example to improve the teaching of phonics or use '*challenge packs*' to raise expectation of what pupils can achieve. You are developing partnerships with the local infant school to secure smooth transition from Year 2 to Year 3.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector