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Mr Ashley Seymour-Williams
The Headteacher
Patcham Junior School
Ladies Mile Road
Patcham
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 8TA

Dear Mr Seymour-Williams

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Patcham Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 25 April 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection I met with you and the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and two representatives of the local authority. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan and considered a range of documentation. I made brief visits to all the classrooms and an assembly.

Context

There have been no major changes at the school since the section 5 inspection.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You and the governing body have fully accepted the findings of the inspection. You are ambitious for the school and are working hard to achieve the required improvement as soon as possible.

You are being uncompromising in setting the highest expectations for all pupils. This includes a clear aim that Patcham pupils who have special educational needs will achieve as well as those who do not. You have made some positive moves in this direction. The new coordinator for special educational needs is working to help teachers recognise and meet the needs of individual pupils more accurately, and you have arranged a review of all the extra programmes for pupils with special needs. You have given the deputy headteacher overall responsibility for managing the teaching assistant team and, during the inspection, I saw teaching assistants working more effectively with individuals and groups, both in lessons and away from the class.

You have also been clear with staff that no one should limit their aspirations for pupils who receive additional funding through the government's pupil premium. You have given the deputy headteacher specific responsibility for the achievement of this group, and the school's spring term assessments indicate that these pupils are now making better progress, together with pupils who have special educational needs.

You have supported these high expectations for the most vulnerable pupils with action to hold all teachers more fully to account for the progress of all the pupils in their class, including the most able. You are combining information from lesson observations, pupils' assessments and checks on exercise books more effectively to judge the quality of teaching and to inform your feedback to staff.

During the inspection there was clear evidence in all classes that pupils are responding to your raised expectations by taking pride and care in their work. No negative behaviour or attitudes to learning were evident, and I saw Year 3 pupils proudly and sensibly sharing their recent 'Fairy Tales' topic in a family assembly.

The school's improvement plan is clear, and ties in well with the local authority's statement of action. The school's plan sets out ambitious targets for pupils' progress and for improvement in the quality of teaching, with appropriate actions and timescales. The local authority's statement of action meets all requirements and includes a wide range of coordinated support. The local authority responded promptly to the inspection judgement with the clear aim of securing urgent improvement in the school. Both plans are due for updating this term, and we agreed that sharpening the measures of success will support leaders and governors in checking whether actions are actually bringing about the required improvement.

Governors are providing effective challenge and a specific committee has been set up to review the school's progress. The recent reconstitution of the governing body has allowed for the recruitment of new members with specific expertise, while longstanding governors continue to develop their knowledge and skills. Governors use their visits to the school well to check information provided to them and they put challenging questions to the headteacher and other leaders during meetings.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made.

- The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.
- The local authority's plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Brighton and Hove. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector