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Dominic English
Headteacher
Wilbury Junior School
Bedford Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 4DU

Dear Mr English

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wilbury 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 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:

- show how much impact the planned actions have on improving outcomes for pupils, to make sure that improvements are well embedded.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, phase leaders, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body with three governors, and the school's Hertfordshire Improvement Partner to discuss the action taken since the previous inspection. The action plan (the Single Plan) was evaluated. I looked at a sample of pupils' work and visited each classroom with senior leaders.

Context

Two new governors have been appointed since the previous inspection. A sports apprentice has been appointed using additional government funding for developing pupils' physical fitness.

Main findings

The day after the inspection, the senior team started to put together a new action plan to focus on the areas identified for improvement. Collaboration with staff and the governing body ensured a common understanding about the work to be done and a clear, positive message from you that improvement can and must happen quickly. The plan builds on the things that were already starting to make a difference at the time of the inspection and, importantly, seeks to accelerate the pace of improvement. The Single Plan gives the right messages about the priorities and how staff with different responsibilities are expected to play their part. Frequent reviews of the plan provide useful information about what has taken place. Evaluations of how well the planned actions improve pupils' learning and the teaching are not yet sharp enough, particularly to show where pupils make good, rather than just expected progress.

Analysis of pupils' attainment for this academic year indicates that more pupils are making faster progress each term, which matches well with improvements in the quality of teaching. This has happened because you have tightened up on the things that underpin good teaching and increased the opportunities for staff to discuss how well pupils are doing. For example, staff meetings focus on improving teaching, pupil-progress meetings take place more frequently, support programmes are monitored more often and a range of sources are used to check the quality of pupils' learning. As a result, staff are confident about making changes and pupils are more involved in showing what they have learned. Teachers' marking and the use of classroom resources support pupils more consistently in knowing how to improve their work, but these things are better developed in some classes than others.

In collaboration with senior leaders, the governing body quickly got to work on reviewing the use of pupil-premium funding. The governor responsible for overseeing this aspect of the school's work has researched best practice and is a strong advocate for this group of pupils. A policy and funding plan are in place, with suitable arrangements to check their effectiveness in raising pupils' achievements in the near future.

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 senior team and the governing body value the support from local authority advisers. The support works well to give clear professional advice and challenge. This includes support from the human resources team, clerking for the governing body, training for effective governance, and challenge to senior leaders from the Education Improvement Partner and the Hertfordshire Improvement Partner. Local authority advisers quite appropriately expect the senior team and governors to ask for help and advice when they need it, while maintaining a watching eye on the improvements. The school will be part of a local authority project starting soon with a group of local infant and junior schools, looking at assessments of pupils' attainments in Years 2 and 3.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley

Her Majesty's Inspector