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Ms Helen O'Donoghue
Executive Headteacher
CET Primary School Tower Hamlets
The Kirtland Centre, 1-3 Coborn Street
London
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Dear Ms O'Donoghue

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to CET Primary School Tower Hamlets

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 February 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure that the activities planned for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage provide adequate challenge to prepare them for the next stage in their learning
- provide frequent opportunities for pupils to record what they learn in English and mathematics in their books
- make plans for the review of governance.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and Constable Education Trust Primary Schools (CETPS) interim director of finance and operations. I also held telephone conversations with the Chair of the Governing Body and with two advisers

who provide professional support to the school, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan. Achievement information, minutes from Governing Body meetings and recent records of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning were scrutinised. I joined you and the deputy headteacher to visit some classrooms where we looked at pupils' English and mathematics books.

Context

Since the last inspection, a Reception class teacher has left the school. Two teacher associates now teach this class. Additionally, you have appointed a teaching assistant to work with one of the Reception classes. You have reorganised the arrangements for Year 2 pupils who are now taught English and mathematics in a separate class every morning. The one parent governor has left the Governing Body and has not been replaced. Many of the staff are leaving the school at the end of the summer term.

The Governing Body is working with The Department for Education to seek a new Multi Academy Trust to take responsibility for the school. The negotiations are at an advanced stage but at the time of my visit, a new partnership for CET Primary School Tower Hamlets had not been finalised. The staff and parents are aware of these negotiations.

Main findings

Since the recent inspection, you have changed the teaching arrangements for some of the classes. There are qualified teachers in only a minority of the classes, with the remainder taught by teacher associates or other trainees. The staff who remain at the school demonstrate a commitment to wanting to improve the learning for the pupils they teach. You are using external support to improve teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is ensuring that in the Reception classes, more of the activities that are provided for children are appropriate. However, there remains a lack of urgency in lessons. Children have too few opportunities to record their work and many of the activities are not challenging enough.

Learning in mathematics is improving because you have reorganised the way in which pupils are grouped. Year 2 pupils are benefitting from small group teaching every day and Year 1 pupils are working in more closely matched ability groups. Pupils' workbooks show that teachers provide high quality feedback to pupils about their work, which clearly identifies what needs to be done next time.

Pupils in Year 1 are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than previously. You insist that teachers demonstrate, in their planning, how they will meet the needs of the various groups of pupils, including those who are more able. As a result, the gap between how well boys and girls were doing in mathematics has been closed. You have are continuing with your arrangements for the teaching of

early reading skills and your assessments indicate that an average proportion of pupils will achieve the expected standard in the national phonics check for Year 1 pupils this summer.

You have sought advice and expertise from the education welfare service at Tower Hamlets. This is successfully improving attendance which, although not yet at the national average, shows a considerable increase from the time of the inspection. You are effectively engaging parents so that they are better informed about why good patterns of attendance at school are so important.

The deputy headteacher is using her expertise and strong classroom practise to coach and mentor less experienced colleagues within the school. Evidence in teachers' files show the impact of this work on improving the quality of teaching. You observe learning frequently and consider other evidence from looking at pupils' books and your learning walks to classrooms, when making judgments about whether the learning is yet good enough.

The work of the Governing Body remains a significant weakness and shows little sign of improvement since the last inspection. It has focused its efforts on seeking permission to transfer the school to another Multi Academy Trust and putting the necessary arrangements in place. It has not undertaken or planned for a review of its work, as was recommended following a visit from a DfE adviser and subsequently following the last inspection.

The school action plan has an appropriate focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The plan, which was written by you and the deputy headteacher, also identifies actions to improve the effectiveness of the Governing Body. However, you told me that governors were not involved in formulating the plan. The relationship between the Governing Body and the staff is distant. The Chair of the Governing Body meets with you regularly, but individual governors do not visit the school to evaluate the quality of provision and are not known by the staff. Minutes from Governing Body meetings show that it receives information from you about the quality of teaching and learning. However, it is not clear whether governors analyse and evaluate the information that they receive and then plan for improvements.

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 are using the expertise of two external advisers to support you to improve the quality of teaching and to provide leadership support. This has been effective in bringing about the improvements that I saw. However, continual changes to the teaching arrangements for classes mean that the impact of the support provided for teachers will be short lived and not have the longer-term impact that you desire.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Tower Hamlet.

Yours sincerely

Adam Higgins
Her Majesty's Inspector