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Mrs Lynette Parvez
Headteacher
Kelmscott School
245 Markhouse Road
Walthamstow
E17 8DN

Dear Mrs Parvez

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kelmscott School

Following my visit to your school on 8 May 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:

- ensure the planned actions to develop literacy and numeracy in all subjects are implemented and sustained to accelerate progress.
- develop the recommendations outlined in the review on governors, once it is finalised and published.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with and other senior leaders, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, a group middle leaders, the executive school council and a representative from the local authority. You took me on a tour of several subject areas, to scrutinise learning, and the organisation of students into groups, particularly in English and mathematics. I also considered the recent minutes of the full governing body, and scrutinised various documents on developing

literacy and numeracy skills, and monitoring, including tracking and the impact of performance management.

Context

Since the recent section 5 inspection, two teachers from the science and drama departments have left the school. Two specialist teachers were appointed to take over the teaching of these subjects.

Main findings

My discussions with every group – staff, students, governors and the representative from the local authority – indicated that morale is high. All adults spoken to were clear that you and other senior leaders have been very open about the reasons for the decline in 2013 results in English. Your openness has contributed to a methodical review of English and mathematics before planning the next steps to accelerate improvement in these subjects. First, you have re-organised groups of students so that they can receive targeted support. Second, you have taken into consideration the use of resources, in particular, people and their deployment. For instance, you indicated that the additional government funding is used creatively to provide extra support for students. Third, my scrutiny of performance management information shows that you have developed it further to drive teaching and hold staff to account for students' achievement. Our brief visits to a few lessons indicated that there is a sharper focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Consequently, you report that the tracking information shows that students are making better progress.

You have not hesitated in appointing key staff to lead the development of literacy and numeracy projects across the school. They are involving both staff and students in generating exciting ideas. Discussions indicate that literacy work is far more advanced than in mathematics. While it is too early to report on the planned projects, early indication suggests that students are increasingly avid readers. Your emphasis on monitoring teaching is giving all staff more direct and hard hitting messages when making a judgement. Your approach is signalling that nothing short of good is acceptable. As a result, leaders at all levels mentioned that the line management system is more rigorous with good support systems in place to develop teaching. We discussed and agreed that while the observation cycle is pertinent, the feedback provided could be sharper – the proforma used is prescriptive and does not focus well on the impact of teaching on students' achievement. My scrutiny of the tracking information suggests that you have some good systems in place which are aligned to performance management. You all said that the quality of marking is much better, and students support this view. Nevertheless, you recognise that the new approach is developing.

The school's action plan is appropriate. It includes clear lines of responsibility, measurable targets and monitoring and evaluation but milestones are not identified. to gauge progress made over time.

The governing body, like the local authority, believe in and supports the work you and your staff are doing to accelerate improvement. They are clear about expectations and have used their professional expertise to change their approach to working. Minutes show that specialist governors now lead on specific areas of work. Governors indicated that they are now more forensic when analysing performance. Minutes suggests that they are questioning and triangulating evidence, particularly as they are not prepared to accept low or mediocre results. Their action plan and the emerging recommendations from the recent review, yet to be published, will need to be implemented in line with the school's action plan.

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

As indicated above, the local authority feels that you are taking the school in the right direction. Monthly accountability meetings have therefore been replaced with the link adviser now reporting to the Director of Children's Service on the school's progress. Support is therefore focused on providing advice; developing middle leaders, including the literacy and numeracy coordinators; observing teaching and making short visits to lessons; and developing the skills of governors to challenge you and other leaders on outcomes. Senior and middle leaders and the governors say that the quality of support is very helpful.

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

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector