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Pali Nahal
Headteacher
Blackheath Primary School
Britannia Road
Rowley Regis
B65 9NF

Dear Mrs Nahal

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Blackheath Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 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 February 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:

- ensure that the focus on improving pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work is maintained across all year groups and that pupils always strive to do their best.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your deputy head, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and an external consultant to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's plans for improvement, the impact of performance management and the outcomes of monitoring activities. I also reviewed some of the school's achievement

data. I visited all classes, talked to a number of pupils and looked at samples of books.

Context

Since the recent inspection, you have been appointed as headteacher. You have appointed two deputy headteachers from September 2014, a behaviour mentor and a parent support worker will also start work this term. A new governor has joined the governing body. You have also had an external review of governance and the use of the pupil premium grant. The school is linked to two teaching schools, Lightwoods Primary and Manor Primary.

Main findings

Your appointment as headteacher and the findings of the recent inspection have injected greater urgency into school improvement. You have already made a considerable impact on improving teaching. Your school improvement plan is linked tightly to the areas for development identified in the inspection report. You have clear, quantifiable milestones that link to your monitoring cycle and through this the targets set in both teachers' and teaching assistants' appraisals. Teachers and teaching assistants are more accountable for improving the progress of pupils. Your restructured senior leadership team has increased the school's capacity to improve teaching because you have identified leaders who can work with teachers to share good practice. You have improved how you observe teaching because you focus on pupils' learning and the progress of different groups of pupils.

You have begun to raise expectations of what pupils, especially the most able can achieve through your improved tracking of pupils' progress. Teachers use this information to plan work that is better matched to the learning needs of pupils. Teachers write their own half-termly action plans which explain what they are intending to do to improve and maintain pupils' progress. Training for teachers and teaching assistants has helped them improve their questioning of pupils. Teaching assistants are more aware of what they need to do to support pupils effectively.

You have re-organised the curriculum and this has improved pupils' engagement in their learning. Pupils stated they enjoyed their lessons more and that they are memorable. They are keen to talk and write about them. The weekly perfect presentation award is encouraging pupils to improve their handwriting and the presentation of their work. Good handwriting and presentation does not happen in all classes. Teachers' marking of work in pupils' books is beginning to help pupils improve their work.

Governors have used the external review of governance to re-structure their committees. They have set up an interim strategic group. They have begun training to update their skills and knowledge. You provide them with a range of information about pupils' progress and this is helping them to hold you to account. The review of

pupil premium spending has increased governors' awareness of their need to monitor provision and its impact to ensure value for money. Governors are encouraged to come into school and have begun to develop the role of link governors.

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 makes regular visits to the school. Through these visits, senior leaders and the governors are challenged and supported. Strong links with the training schools are used beneficially to improve teaching through teachers identifying innovative and effective strategies and using them in their own practice. The external consultant is working closely with staff and governors to build capacity.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector