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Jeannine Olivier
Acting Head Teacher
South Borough Primary School
Stagshaw Close
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Maidstone
Kent
ME15 6TL

Dear Ms Olivier

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to South Borough Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2012. 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 last section 5 inspection and plans are sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- make sure that when you check on aspects of teaching, such as marking, you focus on whether these are making a positive difference to pupils' learning and progress
- give pupils enough time in lessons to produce work of sufficient length and quality.

Evidence

During the morning I visited all of the classes with you, looked at a sample of pupils' books and at the work on display around the school. I also looked at the latest

information about how well the pupils are achieving in reading, writing and mathematics and the most recent school improvement plan. I met with other leaders of the school, including the chair of the governing body. The local authority adviser sent me her most recent records of the regular review and challenge meetings.

Main findings

There have been major changes since my last visit in January 2013. You became the acting headteacher shortly after that visit and the school was supported during your absence by another Kent school. The governing body has changed significantly and now has strong and effective leadership. Several key responsibilities, such as the leadership of English, have also been reviewed and reallocated.

There are clear routines being used across the school, such as systems for planning and marking pupils work and for managing behaviour. There is a regular and accurate system for checking on how well pupils are developing their reading, writing and mathematics skills. These are linked to meetings when class teachers, the special educational needs coordinator, English and mathematics leaders discuss the progress or lack of progress and decide what action needs to be taken to speed up the rate of progress for all pupils. When changes are required, such as to improve the teaching of writing, staff are trained and given individual support, so that improvements are beginning to become normal practice. Staff are working more cohesively. For example, the nursery and reception staff work more closely together to plan appropriate provision for all of the youngest children. As a result, everyone knows what is expected of them and there is a strong sense of team work and purpose.

The impact of the improvements can be seen in the rising standards in English and mathematics in all classes and the faster pace of improvement in most. There are examples of good quality work across different subjects, such as in Year 5, where pupils' built on their knowledge of history at the same time as practising their writing skills. You and your colleagues are aware that, in some cases, the rate of improvement needs to be even more rapid, so that pupils make up for previous slow progress. The signs are encouraging that this is happening.

There have also been significant improvements in pupils' behaviour. There are few instances now of poor behaviour and during this visit, pupils were cooperative and attentive in lessons. The atmosphere around school was focused and purposeful. In several classes, including the Year 6 class and in the Early Years Foundation stage, pupils showed considerable resilience and staying power, even when working on complex and challenging activities.

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 school has benefitted from leadership and management support from another Kent school, professional development and training from Lilac Sky education and latterly from the intensive support and challenge provided by the Local Authority advisor. The school leaders are exploring the school becoming an academy as part of the Swale Multi Academy Trust and colleagues from the trust have recently visited the school to enhance monitoring and evaluation activities.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector