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Ms Lynne Slater
Headteacher
Lea Community Primary School
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Dear Ms Slater

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lea Community Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit with Eileen Mulgrew Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 12 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, a group of pupils, two members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and reviewed other documentation supplied by the school. I undertook a learning walk, accompanied by you and another member of staff, to observe pupils in their lessons.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in February, an acting assistant headteacher has left the school after gaining promotion. Two governors have resigned owing to other commitments.

Main findings

You, and other leaders including governors, accept that the areas for improvement identified

at the February 2014 inspection are appropriate and helpful areas to develop the school. The school's improvement plan focuses on suitable actions aimed at developing provision. While the school has targets for pupils' achievement, these are not clearly linked with the actions detailed in the improvement plan.

The school has introduced a range of measures aimed at improving provision and outcomes. For example, after identifying that not enough pupils were arriving in school on time, an initiative to improve pupils' punctuality at the beginning of the school day has, to date, had a positive impact. Steps to develop teaching and learning include an external review from the local authority and this has provided evidence of improvements in the quality of teaching. A recently introduced programme to use testing to identify where interventions can be targeted more effectively has not had sufficient time to show impact. Pupils believe that teachers' more consistent application of the school's behaviour policy is helping to improve behaviour in lessons and attitudes to work.

The role of teaching assistants has been reviewed and job descriptions made clearer. The school has introduced a training programme to develop the role of teaching assistants and, as a result, they are providing more effective support to pupils. For example, additional planning time before and after school is allowing teaching assistants opportunities to discuss with teachers the learning needs of pupils in forthcoming lessons.

Teachers are now more aware of the need to provide appropriate levels of challenge to pupils of all abilities. However, this remains an area for further development particularly in the teaching of mathematics. While teachers are beginning to ensure that more mathematical tasks involve solving problems, they need to be careful that problem solving is not seen as an extension activity that only the faster workers get on to.

The need to improve pupils' achievement in writing remains a key priority for the school. Actions to address this, such as ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to write at length, have begun to improve the quality of pupils' writing. However, the school's data suggest that achievement in writing remains lower in relation to targets than achievement in other areas. The school has a strengthened marking policy and leaders are working to ensure that all members of staff apply it consistently. Inspection evidence identified some examples of good marking and feedback that indicates to pupils how they can improve.

The school has begun the process of strengthening subject leadership. A newly appointed deputy headteacher, due to take up post in June, will have responsibility for mathematics. Subject leadership in English is currently under review. The process to review the use of the pupil premium has begun. An internal review has identified ways that the funding can be used more efficiently; the external review, involving the local authority, is due to take place in June.

Governors have a clear idea of where the school is strong and where it needs to improve. A newly formed sub-committee focuses specifically on how the school implements its improvement plan. Some governors have undertaken additional training in safeguarding. After undertaking a skills audit, governors are now in a stronger position to make best use of the skills that they have.

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 has identified that the school needs additional support and has made additional contact hours available. Local authority officers have reviewed the improvement plan and undertaken a review of teaching in the school. They have supported the school in the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and in organising links with staff in other local schools.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Paul Chambers

Her Majesty's Inspector