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Jenny Wallbank
Headteacher
Stoneydelph Primary School
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Dear Mrs Wallbank

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stoneydelph 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 of my visit. 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 February 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 that teachers move pupils on to new learning more quickly during the lesson, particularly in mathematics
- make sure that pupils across the school receive the precise guidance they need to improve their work
- refine and simplify the reports to the governing body in order to make clear which groups of pupils are now making accelerated progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. The school

improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including information about pupils' achievement, notes of pupil progress meetings, and feedback to teachers following lesson observations. During this visit, you joined me on short visits to lessons to review pupils' work and to talk to pupils about their learning. At the same time, a local authority representative joined the deputy headteacher on short visits to lessons.

Context

Since my previous visit in June 2013 five teachers have left the school. The governing body has appointed three new permanent teachers and one temporary teacher. The leadership team now includes the teachers with responsibility for reading, writing and mathematics. The governing body has also appointed a teacher from within the school to lead improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. She will become a member of the senior leadership team in September 2014.

Main findings

You have responded to weaknesses identified at the previous monitoring inspection with a sense of urgency. You and the deputy headteacher have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the changes necessary to move the school to 'good'. The revised school improvement plan accurately reflects the priorities for improvement.

You and other senior leaders are providing teachers and teaching assistants with useful support and advice. This is contributing to improvements in teaching, as confirmed by your records. Each half term, senior leaders meet with teachers and discuss the progress of pupils and the exact actions needed to help pupils make better progress. Once these actions have been agreed, you and other senior leaders make sure they are implemented. Consequently, pupils are making better progress than at the time of the last monitoring inspection. An increasing proportion of pupils are making good progress.

During our brief visits to lessons we observed pupils of different abilities completing activities that were well-matched to their learning needs, and pupils using a suitable range of resources to help them with their learning. We also observed teachers using questions to successfully extend pupils' thinking. As seen in pupils' workbooks, they have regular opportunities to use their knowledge of number to solve complex mathematical problems. However, mathematics workbooks also show that teachers do not always move pupils onto new learning quickly enough. During 'guided reading' sessions, teachers plan suitable activities that help to develop pupils' reading skills. For instance, these activities encourage pupils to use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics) to read unfamiliar words, read a variety of texts and to search for specific pieces of information.

In most of the lessons we visited, pupils demonstrated positive attitudes to learning and were keen to talk about their work. Occasionally, a few pupils were observed not paying attention and talking while the teacher was giving instructions.

Teachers' marking is variable in quality. Pupils do not always receive the guidance they need to improve their work. Teachers are increasingly giving pupils the opportunity to review their own work. For example, pupils I spoke with in Years 5 and 6 stated that they identify 'what went well' and also 'what was difficult'. They confirmed that teachers read their comments and give them the help they need.

Members of the governing body have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. During meetings and visits to school, governors ask pertinent questions about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Senior leaders' reports to governors identify exactly where further improvements are needed. In contrast, these reports do not always identify improvements in pupils' learning. For instance, the reports do not always specify which groups of pupils are now making accelerated progress or the extent to which gaps between pupils in the school and pupils nationally have closed.

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 and other senior leaders have received an appropriate level of support from the school's local authority adviser, a national leader in education and a local leader in education. Teachers and teaching assistants have benefited from opportunities to visit local schools and the wide range of training organised by the local authority. This support is helping to raise pupils' achievement and strengthen teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector