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Mrs D Hockey
Headteacher
Hadlow School
Hadlow
Tonbridge
Kent
TN11 0EH

Dear Mrs Hockey

Requires improvement: second monitoring inspection visit to Hadlow School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 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:

- draw up and implement tailored programmes of support for teachers whose practice is not consistently good and set deadlines for improvement.

Evidence

During the visit, we discussed the school's progress and a meeting was held with two members of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. The new school development plan was evaluated and the records of checks made on the quality of teaching were reviewed. I made joint visits to four lessons with you and observed your feedback to one member of staff.

Main findings

You have worked hard to tackle the areas of weakness identified at the previous monitoring visit in March and the school is now in a better position to make progress on its journey to 'good'. The new school development plan is comprised of a strategic plan for the year and an operational plan for the current term. This makes for rather a lengthy document, with some duplication of information. Nevertheless, the new plan has clear short-term and long-term targets for improvement in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching that are realistic and achievable. You have also changed the rating system used to review the progress of the plan so that it is clear to the governing body whether the school is on track to complete actions within agreed timescales.

Checks on the quality of teaching are now more frequent and more rigorous. You have drawn up a schedule for regular visits to classrooms, reviews of pupils' workbooks and scrutiny of teachers' planning. The evidence gathered from these monitoring activities is now triangulated with information on pupils' progress and then used to set individual targets for teachers. It is too early to judge the impact of this new way of working, but it is clear from observations of teaching during this visit that the quality of teaching remains variable. Although relationships between staff and pupils are invariably very positive and teachers try to make learning interesting and relevant for their pupils, some teachers still do not make enough use of information about pupils' current attainment to plan the next steps in learning. In these cases, activities in lessons are not well matched to pupils' needs. This leads to uneven progress for pupils. These members of staff will need a carefully structured programme of support to help them to improve quickly and securely.

Governors are now confident that they have the information they need to hold you to account. You provide detailed information on pupils' attainment and progress to them each half term. This information, together with a programme of visits to the school has enabled them to gain a better insight into the school's work and judge the progress that is being made. Both you and the governing body are aware of the need to accelerate the pace of improvement and to reduce the school's reliance on external support.

I will visit the school in the second half of the autumn term to review progress.

External support

The school has had considerable support from a variety of advisers and consultants since the previous monitoring visit. This has been sharply focused on tackling the weaknesses with improvement planning and the monitoring of teaching. The adviser from the local authority has built a good working relationship with the headteacher.

She continues to visit the school regularly and her reports make clear judgements on the progress seen and provide valuable guidance on next steps.

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

Yours sincerely

Melanie Cox
Additional Inspector