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Mrs Nicola Browne
Headteacher
Moorlands Primary School
Church End Lane
Reading
RG30 4UN

Dear Mrs Browne

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Moorlands Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 June 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:

- strengthen the action plan by adding measurable success criteria and milestones to check progress along the way; and ensure it stays on track by being clear what resources are needed and who will keep a check that actions are taken on time
- build the leadership capacity by developing the role of middle leaders and curriculum coordinators.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and your senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the Local Authority to discuss the action taken since

the last inspection. We walked around school together to see classes at work. I evaluated the school action plan and looked at other key documents.

Context

There have been no significant changes in staffing since the inspection. Three governors have resigned as they feel other commitments mean they cannot give the time needed to the school.

Main findings

There is a clear commitment from you, your senior leaders and governors to improving the quality of education for pupils at the school. You were all well aware of the school's weaknesses prior to the inspection so you fully accept the improvements needed. Morale has been boosted by the inspection recognising the rapid improvements made in recent times. As such, it is seen as a springboard for future improvement. The action plan is appropriately focused on improving the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and leadership and management. It takes account of all the points for improvement identified during the inspection and sets out in some detail what actions will be taken. A separate planner mapping what will happen each week helps you and your senior leaders manage the improvement work over a term. I suggested that you should make sure the plan distinguishes between monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring should identify who will keep a check on implementation to avoid slippage. Evaluation should determine impact. To do this effectively it would be helpful to incorporate the targets you have set for pupils' achievement for each year group in the plan. Success criteria need to be measurable so that it is clear what the school is aiming for, with clear milestones to check progress along the way. We discussed the need to detail exactly what resources are needed, time and money, to make sure the plan stays on track.

There has been concerted action to improve teaching and learning. Staff meetings and training have focused on the specific points identified by the inspection. Senior leaders follow this up with learning walks to check that what has been agreed is being implemented effectively across the school. Walking around school I saw how, through the use of purposeful displays and activities, pupils are being encouraged to develop better attitudes to learning. I heard how teachers have higher expectations of the amount of work pupils can complete in a lesson and saw how some were maximising the time spent on learning. I could see how you are tackling improving pupils' presentation of their work in the wider context of everyone taking pride in the school's work. Staff as well as pupils are expected to write in the style of the new handwriting scheme. You are systematically improving classrooms and shared areas to create a more conducive learning environment as money allows.

Alongside this development work sit your 'business as usual' systems of setting targets for what pupils will achieve and checking on the quality of teaching over time. I was pleased to hear that you use data on pupils' progress and work in their books, as well as observing lessons and talking to pupils about their learning when you evaluate teaching. It is clear that through this you know where the weakest teaching is and that you taking action to improve it.

You and your senior leaders make good use of your other school to support improvement work at Moorlands, and of opportunities to learn from good practice locally and further afield. You have begun to develop your team leaders. They are routinely involved in senior leadership discussions about improvement and have responsibility for cascading this to their teams. More recently they have had training on how to work with staff to bring about improvement. It is too early to see the impact of this work yet and plans to develop curriculum leaders have yet to start.

Governors are clear what the priorities for improvement are. They have not been directly involved in drawing up the action plan, but are clear about their role in evaluating its impact. The Curriculum Committee has a clear brief for this. Minutes show a suitable level of challenge, for example when setting the budget governors checked it linked with the priorities in the action plan.

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 values the support it has had from local authority literacy and numeracy advisers this school year. You have evidence it has improved the teaching of the staff involved. The impact of other support is less discernable. The school was without a school partnership adviser at the start of the school year so you bought in an external leadership consultant. When local authority support became available it was agreed it would be best used to work with newly qualified teachers to maximise the support available and avoid duplication. Those teachers are positive about the opportunities they have had to reflect on their practice, but there has been no formal evaluation to date of the impact it has had on their teaching. Discussions to check on the school's progress and hold senior leaders to account are not regular enough to give the local authority an in-depth picture of the school's position.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Bradley
Her Majesty's Inspector