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Rachel Higgins
Acting headteacher
Birchen Coppice Primary School
Woodbury Road
Kidderminster
DY11 7JJ

Dear Mrs Higgins

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Birchen Coppice Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 month and year. 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 all teachers have the necessary skills to accurately judge the levels pupils are working at
- check that teachers' marking is having the desired impact on pupils' progress
- take sufficient account of information about pupils' achievement, including work in their books, when making judgements about the quality of teaching.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with: the acting headteacher and headteacher designate; other senior leaders; ten members of the governing body, including the Chair; and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action

taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and a range of documents was examined, including information about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. A series of short visits was made to classes to look at learning and talk to pupils.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and will take up her post in September. One teacher has left the school. The local authority has carried out a review of governance and governors have begun to consider the recommendations and draw up an action plan.

Main findings

You and the acting deputy headteacher responded quickly to the inspection outcome by drawing up a well-focused action plan. It shows clearly the steps you will take to address the areas identified in the inspection report and indicates how you will judge whether the actions taken are making a difference. You are using the plan well to drive improvement and to measure the progress made.

You and other leaders regularly visit lessons and check pupils' books. You use the findings of these checks to identify training needs. The training provided has increased teachers' confidence in teaching some aspects of mathematics. Teachers are being supported to plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before and to make mathematics lessons more interesting. There is an increased focus on mathematical activities around the school and pupils have more opportunities to practise mathematical skills in other subjects. For example older pupils have incorporated mathematics activities into a topic on Romans and children in the Nursery were deeply involved in weighing soil as part of their play. As a result, some pupils are making better progress. Nevertheless, the challenge for some of the more able pupils is too low.

Your checks on pupils' books have ensured that all teachers now follow agreed procedures for marking pupils' work. These checks remain focused on compliance and do not probe deeply enough into the impact marking has on the progress pupils make. You frequently observe lessons and give teachers clear points for improvement. You follow these up to ensure they are acted upon. However, your judgements about the quality of teaching are still based too heavily on what is seen during lesson observations and not enough on the information you have about pupils' achievement over time. This sometimes leads to an overly-generous view of teaching quality, as it does not match with the progress made by some groups of pupils.

Governors are passionate about ensuring the school improves. They have a growing understanding of their role and are committed to developing a better structure to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. They ask challenging questions and have sought training to help them do this more rigorously, for example when discussing data about pupils' achievement. An external review of

governance, recommended at the last inspection, has recently been completed. Governors are keen to use the recommendations as they move forward. The recommended review of the school's use of the pupil premium is scheduled for July. The school has already considered how to better use this funding. Governors are considering how they will monitor that it is being used to maximum effect.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. During this inspection it was agreed that the new headteacher will send HMI copies of her reports to the governing body and provide information about pupils' achievement at the end of each term. The Chair of the Governing Body agreed to send the governors' development plan.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics. This is already having an impact on the progress of some pupils. You value the support given by the human resources adviser. The local authority has now completed the review of governance and made recommendations. The school improvement adviser has provided ongoing support and challenge for monitoring the quality of teaching. Regular project board meetings hold the school to account for the progress being made. Copies of the minutes of these meetings will be sent to HMI in future.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following: