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Colin Lavelle
Executive Headteacher
Dulwich Wood Nursery School
Lyllal Avenue
London
SE21 8QS

Dear Mr Lavelle

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dulwich Wood Nursery 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 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 section 5 inspection in February 2014 when the school was judged to require improvement. The visit was the first monitoring inspection 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 the action plan sets out clearly how actions will have an impact on children's achievement
- strengthen the role of the governing body in monitoring the impact of actions taken, including through visiting the school.

Evidence

During the visit, I met you and the deputy headteacher, two governors, and two representatives from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's action plan and looked at other documents. I sampled adults' planning and assessment information. I looked at evidence from your observations of teaching, planning and assessment as well as records of the local authority's monitoring visits.

Context

Since the inspection the school has entered into a hard federation with Dulwich Wood Primary School. The governing bodies of both schools were dissolved in April and a new governing body of the federated schools was constituted in May. The planned process of restructuring staffing for September, when the school will have fewer pupils, will be completed soon.

Main findings

The action plan sets out a clear list of appropriate activities to address the areas for improvement set at the inspection. It is clear which staff member will lead the actions and who will check that they have been completed. The plan is not static and you are systematic about updating it. However, the criteria by which you will measure the success of the actions relate to processes or activities rather than to outcomes for children. It is important to be clear about the difference you expect those actions to make to children's achievement. Furthermore, there is not a clear role for governors in monitoring the impact of the action plan. The new governing body has been in place for only a short time. Thus, governors have had little chance to monitor the impact of actions in a systematic way. The roles and responsibilities of governors are being re-established. Plans for governors' visits to the school to focus on specific actions in the plan are well-founded.

The role of the deputy headteacher in leading change and strengthening practice has developed significantly. Her role in checking the quality of teaching is much stronger than at the time of the inspection. She has established clear protocols and systems for observing and recording children's learning which staff follow consistently. Importantly, detailed observations now give a clearer picture of children's progress so that their next steps of learning can be planned. Sweeping changes to the way that children's activities are planned include more opportunities for direct teaching of key language and mathematical skills. The outdoor area is extensive, well organised and contains a wide range of activities to support children's learning.

You use the information from observations to track children's progress. The systems are still being developed but termly analysis has already highlighted that children do better in some areas than others. Your plans to change the way you conduct visits to children's homes before they start at nursery are well conceived. Information from visits will form part of staff's initial assessment of children's needs to provide a more accurate baseline from which you can measure children's progress over time.

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 had already identified the school's need for support. Since the inspection it has provided a high level of support and training for staff. Staff have been receptive to the guidance from a consultant. Practice around planning and assessment is improving as a result. Advisers have monitored the school's progress in improving the provision. The many visits offer practical guidance and advice as well as monitoring that helps set the next steps for further improvement. You are making sensible use of expertise from local schools as well as encouraging stronger links between the nursery and primary school staff to support children's transition.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector