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6 June 2014

Mrs H Williamson
Headteacher
Billingshurst Primary School
Upper Station Road
Billingshurst
RH14 9RE

Dear Mrs Williamson

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Billingshurst 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 confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in March 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. I also met with three members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, there have been several staff changes. The assistant headteacher with responsibility for Key Stage 2 has left the school. A replacement has been appointed and will join the school in September. Two new teachers started work in April to fill other vacancies.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders and governors have responded to the inspection judgements with determination and a resolve to improve as quickly as possible. This positive approach is already making a difference. Following the section 5 inspection, you worked closely with officers from the local authority to draw up a coherent programme of development. The resulting school improvement plan is logically sequenced with sensible timings for new initiatives spread over the next few terms to avoid overloading staff. There are clear short-term and long-term targets for overall attainment and for the quality of teaching which are appropriately challenging. However, there are no specific targets in the school's plan to improve the achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in Key Stage 2. Nor are there targets to raise the attainment of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium. This is particularly important given that inspectors found that both groups of pupils make less progress than similar pupils nationally.

You have rightly focused on the need to build further leadership capacity in the school. You are confident that the new assistant headteacher for Key Stage 2 and the new English subject leader will make a strong contribution to the drive for improvement from September. In the meantime, you have reviewed existing leadership roles, distributing accountability for improving the quality of teaching more widely and ensuring that individual responsibilities are manageable. An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium has been arranged and will take place within the next few weeks.

Work is underway to ensure greater consistency in provision across the school. For example, school leaders have carried out checks in classes to see that the new policy for handwriting and presentation is being applied consistently by all staff. The school's policy for teaching and learning has also been revised to include clear, non-negotiable expectations for all staff and a new policy for checking the quality of teaching has been written. There is a clear understanding of each teacher's strengths and this provides useful feedback to staff following visits to classrooms. However, this information has not been used to draw up tailored support plans for individual teachers to help them develop their skills quickly and securely.

Since March, work has continued to improve the teaching of mathematics. Initiatives such as the daily 'magic maths meetings' are helping to raise the profile of mathematics and improve pupils' confidence. On this visit, several pupils told me how their attitudes to mathematics have changed and how much they enjoy their lessons now. You are confident that standards in mathematics are rising across the school and that the outcomes of the statutory assessments in Year 6 will show improvement this year.

The governing body has been closely involved in the post-inspection planning and is well briefed on the progress of initiatives. Governors are anxious to press ahead with

the external review of governance recommended at the time of the inspection. This will help them to review systems and processes and enhance the contribution that they make to the work of the school.

The local authority's statement of action sets out a comprehensive programme of support for the school. Officers have brokered appropriate support from a local teaching school and from a number of consultants and advisers. They have also made good use of the school's existing links to other providers, such as The Weald Community School.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Cox
Additional Inspector