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Mrs Helen Almond
Headteacher
Frenchwood Community Primary School
Frenchwood Knoll
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 4LE

Dear Mrs Almond

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Frenchwood Community Primary School, Lancashire

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 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 January 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:

- Improve the quality and impact of teachers' marking by:
 - giving pupils the opportunity to correct their work or respond to teachers' advice on how to improve their work within a short time from the work having been marked
 - making sure teachers follow this up and check that their marking is helping pupils improve their work, particularly in writing
 - ensuring all writing, including that in topic books, is marked with equal rigour to that in literacy, so that pupils understand the importance of always writing correctly
 - providing wider opportunities to enrich and extend pupils' writing skills in all subjects across the curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, governors and representatives of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also took a tour of the school, visited lessons, spoke to pupils, scrutinised a sample of pupils' work and examined other documentation, including minutes of the meetings of the governing body and information on the pupil progress currently attending the school.

Context

Four new Key Stage 2 staff appointments have been made with effect from September 2014, because two members of staff are retiring and another is leaving the school. A new post has been created to oversee the use and impact of pupil premium funding. A new member of the senior leadership team, with responsibility for Key Stage 1, joined the staff in April 2014.

Main findings

Despite initial disappointment in all quarters at the outcome of the previous inspection, members of the school community admit that the inspection has been a catalyst for change, spurring the school into action. Most staff have rallied round, determined to support school leaders in their ambition to become a good school as quickly as possible.

Senior leaders, including governors, have sent out a very clear message that the drive for improvement is non-negotiable. This has raised expectations regarding the quality of teaching required. New leadership of Key Stage 1 and imminent changes in staffing have provided an excellent opportunity to bring in new ideas and good practice from other schools. As a result, the school is better placed to go forward.

The school, well-supported by the local authority, has drawn up a detailed, ambitious plan for improvement that covers all areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection. Measurable success criteria, with realistic timescales, provide a clear direction for the school. Governors have been involved in the composition of this plan and have a very accurate and detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

There has been a concerted effort to improve the quality of teaching. The local authority has provided training and one-to-one coaching for staff, with bespoke programmes tailored to individual needs to improve classroom practice. This process has been supportive and positive; nevertheless it is underpinned by rigour and is followed up by senior leaders interviewing class teachers, holding them to account for the progress of pupils in their classes. Teaching assistants observed during the visit made an excellent contribution to pupils' learning; it was frequently difficult to tell who the assistant was and who was the teacher, because both were so actively and purposefully involved in the lesson.

Information on pupils' progress is now collected more frequently so that teachers can step in and sort it out when pupils fall behind in their work. Teachers are required to plan their lessons more thoroughly to take into account the abilities and needs of their pupils. Senior leaders check pupils' work regularly to make sure teachers are marking their books in accordance with the revised policy. This is having an impact in mathematics, but is not as effective in improving pupils' writing in other subjects. Some examples of very poor marking were evident in pupils' books, where teachers had failed to pick up on mistakes in spelling and grammar, leading to pupils making repeated errors.

Pupils' behaviour across the school, both when tightly supervised and when less so, is impeccable. Pupils are polite and friendly. The Early Years Foundation Stage is a particular strength of the school: children enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities and throw themselves with enthusiasm into their learning. For example, during the visit, two pupils were thoroughly amusing themselves stirring bowls of spaghetti with their hands and using highly descriptive language to explain the texture of what they were touching. They eagerly showed me how their teacher had written down the words they were using and they made a very good attempt at reading them back to me.

School leaders and governors have taken a strong stance regarding parents withdrawing their children from school, for example by taking extended holidays. Nevertheless, this problem persists and some parents are therefore not helping their children to get the most they can from the education that the school provides. These parents could support their children and the school more effectively by making sure their child attends school regularly.

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 has a penetrating grasp of the school's areas for development and has devised and delivered a tailored programme of intensive support, particularly to improve the quality of teaching. Of particular benefit has been the link brokered with another local school and support in building capacity at leadership level.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant

Her Majesty's Inspector