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Christine Bell
headteacher
Riverview Primary School
Suffolk Road
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DE15 9HR

Dear Mrs Bell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Riverview Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 13 March 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 last section 5 inspection and plans are appropriately focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take further action to:

- provide appropriate help and guidance to teachers so that they are better able to meet the particular needs of those pupils who speak English as an additional language
- improve further the teaching of phonics across the school, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1
- make sure that the tasks set for pupils in group reading sessions enable them to make rapid gains in their learning
- make sure that teachers correct pupils' grammar and punctuation errors and do not allow pupils' misconceptions to persist.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, three governors, including the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including information about pupils' achievement, as well as a review of pupils' work and brief visits to classrooms.

Context

There have been several changes of staff since the previous inspection with some members of staff currently on long-term absence or on phased return to work. Three members of staff including the headteacher are due to leave at the end of summer term 2014. Currently, the governors are looking to secure an interim headteacher until December 2014, as two recruitment campaigns have failed to secure a permanent appointment.

Main findings

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified in your recent inspection report and with the support of the local authority, you have developed a well-focused action plan concentrating on what needs most improvement. Actions within the school improvement plan are precise and focused. The plan indicates how teaching is to be improved and how pupils are to be helped to make faster progress.

The actions that have been taken since the inspection are beginning to help pupils, particularly the most able and those known to be eligible for free school meals, to make faster progress. Reports from subject leaders, although providing a useful summary, do not always make clear the precise impact their actions are having on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, particularly in the teaching of reading.

Teachers have a better understanding of the progress that pupils need to make. They are more aware of how to support those pupils who speak English as an additional language so that they make faster progress in their learning but teachers recognise that there is still more work they need to do. For example, there is not a system in place to check on the development of specific language skills for those pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are advanced bi-lingual learners and this restricts their progress.

Teachers know that while improvements have been made in some areas, these improvements are not evident in every class, particularly in the teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) and guiding pupils' wider reading. In order to improve pupils' knowledge of phonics staff must ensure they check that the books pupils are reading at home include the sounds they are learning in the daily phonics lesson.

Evidence from pupils' writing books shows that some teachers are not re-enforcing the skills taught in phonics to enable pupils to apply them in their writing. Errors often remain uncorrected and pupils make the same mistake over again. For example, one pupil spelled made – 'mayed' clearly showing that they did not understand how to use a split digraph. This misconception also resulted in the misspelling of words such as came. A similar picture was also found with some teachers allowing pupils' basic punctuation and grammatical errors to persist.

You are aware that although teachers are getting better at using other reading sessions to develop pupils' wider reading skills, more needs to be done to demonstrate that pupils are reading widely and are exposed to the rich diversity of good quality children's fiction and non-fiction books. Groups of pupils working closely with an adult are adequately led and help pupils to read for meaning. However, those groups of pupils working on their own are not set work at the correct level and this slows their progress. Evidence from pupils' group reading journals show that some teachers do not mark this work as carefully as they do pupils' other work; this also restricts the progress that some pupils make.

Members of the governing body are keen to do all they can to help the school move quickly towards good. Governors are asking the right questions of the school's leadership team, particularly when checking on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. They meet regularly to discuss the progress of pupils and the actions that need to be taken. You provide governors with a range of information about pupils' progress.

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 is providing a level of support that is appropriate to the school's need. There is a suitable balance of support and challenge provided by the local authority and the consultants working in partnership with the school. Regular review meetings, led by the local authority, enable its officers to keep a careful check on the school's ability to plan for improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector