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A Fasham & A Ratford
Deputy Headteachers
Dorothy Barley Infants' School
Davington Road
Dagenham
Essex
RM8 2LL

Dear Ms Fasham and Ms Ratford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dorothy Barley Infants' School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 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 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 recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- Sharpen improvement plans so that they include milestones and rigorous evaluation procedures that detail how the governing body will check that the school's actions are making a difference to pupils' learning and the quality of teaching.
- Agree a programme of intervention with the local authority to ensure stability for the strategic leadership of the school.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with senior leaders, the Chair and one other member of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I scrutinised pupils' English and mathematics books during visits to classrooms. I also evaluated the school

improvement plan and the governor's draft action plan and looked at a range of other documents including minutes of governing body meetings.

Context

The substantive headteacher is currently not in school. Two deputy headteachers lead the school. Five class teachers will leave at the end of July 2014. Appointments have been made to replace them in September.

Main findings

Since the absence of the headteacher a new senior leadership team has been formed. The team leads with confidence and has improved the climate for learning in a short space of time. The new leadership team have drawn up a detailed action plan which covers all the areas identified for improvement. The plan is underpinned by subject leaders action plans for improving their areas of responsibility. However, arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school action plan are unclear. There is also a lack of precision about intended outcomes, for example clear milestones in respect of pupils' attainment and the progress that is expected of them. This will make it difficult to monitor the impact of the plan and hold staff to account.

The new leaders have a secure understanding of where teaching is weakest. They have acted with urgency to put in place support and development programmes for a small number of staff. They have clearly explained to staff what is expected of them and provided appropriately timed training to help them all improve. Teachers are now planning together and arrangements exist to share best practice through observation of one another and for drawing on the expertise of other schools to promote improvement. Improvements in marking are increasing pupils' understanding of how well they are progressing. A strong focus on literacy has improved pupils' grammar and the quality and presentation in writing across the school.

The school is calm and orderly. Good examples of pupils' work are displayed in the majority of classrooms. Regular book reviews and pupils progress meetings are presenting a more accurate view of the progress pupils make. Middle leaders responsible for different areas of the school's work are more accountable for their actions. They have increased their level of monitoring, and they have a better understanding of where attention needs to be paid to ensure further improvements are made.

The Chair of the Governing Body is committed to the school's success but does not communicate a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what is needed for improvement. Governors, while highly supportive, are not yet

fully involved in evaluating the work of the school and it is not clear how they propose to develop their effectiveness. The governing body has incorporated the recommendations from the external review of governance conducted in April 2014 into a draft action plan. The plan sets out an adequate agenda for improvement, but the actions lack clear milestones and success criteria by which governors can measure the school's progress on its journey to become a good school.

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 school is making good use of a range of sources to further school improvement, including drawing on the expertise of local schools judged good or outstanding. The local authority has secured a range of appropriate support for the school. The school receives effective and continuing support from the new local authority's improvement officer who regularly visits and helps to monitor the work of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector