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Joanne Adams
Headteacher
William Austin Junior School
Austin Road
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Bedfordshire
LU3 1UA

Dear Ms Adams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to William Austin Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 February 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:

- Unpick and then tackle the subject specific skills that teachers need to develop to improve their teaching of literacy and mathematics.
- Arrange an external review of governance to establish where strengths and weaknesses lie and where improvements should be made for governance to be at least good.
- Make effective use of Ofsted's publications, survey reports, specialist subject grade descriptors, seminars and examples of good practice to assist all subject leaders in driving forward improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, English and mathematics subject leaders, a representative from the local authority and two governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's

action plan was evaluated. You and the deputy took me on a guided tour of the school. I looked at examples of marking in pupils' written work, systems for tracking pupils' progress, examples of teachers' planning and the school's most recent data on pupils' achievement.

Context

Since the previous inspection you and the deputy headteacher have been appointed on permanent contracts. An assistant headteacher has been recruited to start in September 2014. Other key leaders' roles have been changed, for example, the school has identified a year leader for every age group.

Main findings

You and the deputy are ambitious for the school and both of you are honest and realistic about what needs to be done to improve it. You see getting to good as a step along the way to becoming outstanding. Staff's accountability for pupils' achievement has increased significantly through strong systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and checking pupils' progress. Essentially, you have made sure that teachers' judgements about the level of pupils' attainment are accurate, which historically has not always been the case. The baseline for measuring pupils' future progress is secure.

The school action plan is fit for purpose. Actions are linked to pupils' achievement, and success towards the goals is easy to measure. It will be important to ensure that one key leader is identified to be accountable for each action, with another checking for improvement. Leaders for English and mathematics have identified general aspects of teaching that require improvement. They have been working on these with staff with some early evidence of impact. For example, the quality of marking in mathematics has improved and pupils are acting upon their teachers' advice to improve their work. The next step would be to look deeply into the specific skills required to teach each subject effectively and then arrange the appropriate training and coaching for staff. Subject leaders are not using Ofsted publications and other resources widely to support them in driving improvements.

Governors are conscious that they have not always been able to analyse and interpret data as effectively as they should and, importantly, have done something about it. Through training, they are now accessing a broader range of evidence ensuring that they are not overly reliant on you and your deputy for information. It is also enabling them to increase the level of challenge in their questioning of school leaders. An external review of governance would help to establish more clearly what the governing body is doing well and what should be improved, so that governance is at least good by the next inspection.

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 provided a good level of support for the new leadership team including brokering a link with a local good school. In particular, help in checking that teachers' judgements about learning are accurate has made a significant difference to assessment practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector