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Helen Lewis  
Springcroft Primary School  
Grindley Lane  
Blythe Bridge  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST11 9JS

Dear Mrs Lewis

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Springcroft Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 7 July 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 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:

- ensure that plans clearly state how leaders will check that the actions taken have been successful in improving teaching and accelerating pupils' progress
- make sure that when leaders make checks on the quality of teaching, they focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and ensure that teachers are clear about what they need to improve, how they will be supported and when further checks will be made.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and two other senior leaders to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and I spoke on the telephone with a representative of

the local authority. The school action plans were evaluated. I made brief visits to classrooms and considered a range of documents including leaders' records from their checks on teaching and learning.

### **Context**

Since the inspection in March, one teacher has left the school and another will leave in the autumn term. One teacher has been absent for some time due to ill health and is currently on a work break. Two new teachers will join the school in September. Three governors have left the governing body.

### **Main findings**

You and other school leaders have responded positively to the findings of the recent inspection. Your plans for improvement are closely matched to the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. You have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching in order to raise achievement. Your plans set out the actions that you are taking in order to make the necessary improvements. However, they do not always state clearly how you will check that the actions taken are being successful.

Since the inspection you have reviewed the structure of the leadership team to ensure that all leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities. You have also made changes to the deployment of teachers and support staff for September to ensure that the skills of each member of staff are used effectively to meet the needs of different classes and groups of pupils.

You have made changes to the way that teachers plan lessons in order to ensure that teaching provides a good level of challenge for pupils of different ability. You have also developed your systems to make sure that pupils are clear about what they should achieve in English and mathematics lessons. This work is in its early stages and leaders should now plan how they will check the impact of this work on pupils' progress, particularly for more able pupils.

More regular visits to lessons are helping you and other leaders to develop a more thorough understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. You keep records of your findings from lessons observations and provide feedback to teachers. However, these records do not always focus sufficiently on the impact of teachers' actions on pupils' progress. The areas for improvement shared with teachers following lesson observations are sometimes not precise enough to ensure that teachers know exactly what they need to improve, how they will be supported and when further checks will be made.

School leaders are now checking pupils' books more regularly. These checks have shown that teachers' marking is becoming more effective in identifying what pupils need to do to improve their work and in ensuring that pupils have opportunities to respond to this advice.

You have made considerable improvements to the ways that you collect and use information about pupils' progress. You now collect this information more regularly and have good systems in place which enable you to make careful checks on the progress of different classes and groups of pupils. By meeting with every teacher each half term to evaluate the progress of pupils in their class, you are now more able to identify and respond to the needs of any pupils who are not making good progress.

As a consequence of the changes described above, you are becoming more effective in holding teachers to account for the progress made by pupils in their class. You have also begun to tailor your monitoring and support so that it is more precisely focused on aspects of teaching which require most improvement and on those teachers who need extra help to improve their teaching.

You have made arrangements for school leaders and teachers to visit Glebe Primary, an outstanding local school. This has allowed teachers to learn from the good practice of colleagues in similar roles and use this to improve their own teaching.

School information about pupils' progress and early information from national assessments indicate that more pupils in each Key Stage are now making good progress.

Governors have a clear and accurate understanding of the schools' current position and are determined that the necessary improvements are made so that the school quickly becomes good. The governing body have appointed a consultant leader to help them improve their skills. Minutes from meetings of the governing body indicate that governors provide a good level of challenge to school leaders. Governors have planned training to help them become more effective. For example, training is planned for the autumn term to enable governors to carefully check how pupils' progress at Springcroft compares to that of pupils nationally.

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**

Since the inspection in March the local authority has provided additional support to this school. A representative of the local authority visits regularly and now has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The local authority has arranged training for leaders and teachers. This has included training for teachers which is helping them to provide additional challenge for more able pupils. The governing body has been proactive in seeking support and is now working well with an external consultant who is helping them to develop their knowledge and skills. As a result they are becoming more effective in holding school leaders to account for the quality of teaching and for pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**