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Mrs A Allnut
Headteacher
Greenvale Infant School
Symons Avenue
Chatham
ME4 5UP

Dear Mrs Allnut

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Greenvale Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, members of the senior management team, the Chair and other members of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. We visited classrooms together and saw the majority of classes, including the Nursery, at work, during which time I reviewed some of the pupils' books. I looked at information provided by the school, including recent local authority advisers' reports, and information about how well pupils have been learning. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school improvement plan.

Context

Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher has left the school. There are two new assistant headteachers who, along with the inclusion manager, make up the senior leadership team. There is a new Chair of the Governing Body. The school has

reorganised how it teaches pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. These pupils are now taught with their peers in the main classrooms.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since the inspection, you and other senior leaders have taken effective action to improve the school. For example, the building and outdoor areas used are now more engaging for pupils. Teaching is now much better focused on helping pupils to learn the key skills they need in English and mathematics. Your impact can also be seen in the improved achievement of pupils in all year groups. As you are fully aware, however, pupils' attainment, although considerably improved, remains too low.

Children's attainment in Reception has increased and is now in line with the national average. There has been a similar improvement in the number of pupils achieving the expected level in phonics (how letters link to their sounds) in Year 1. Pupils have also done much better in their end of Key Stage 1 assessments this year compared to last. However, they did not do as well as you would like in order to meet your rightly higher expectations. This was particularly so in writing. More pupils who are eligible for support through additional pupil premium funding are making similar or better progress than their peers, but there remains a significant gap between the numbers of these pupils reaching the expected levels compared to their peers. More pupils are now reaching the higher levels in English and mathematics.

The gains pupils are now making follow the improvements in teaching that you have led. You have set clear expectations for all teachers about the progress you want pupils to make over time. Weaker teaching is being effectively challenged and, commendably, you have taken robust action where teaching has not improved quickly enough. The school has made some progress in improving how well pupils are engaged in their learning. We saw some examples of where teachers had thought hard about how to interest their pupils. For example, the use of chocolate melting on pupils' hands helped them form the language they would need to write chocolate-related poems. Pupils enjoyed learning through play in the wildlife area.

We also agreed, however, that there is still more to be done to improve teaching. For example, practical approaches to teaching mathematics were missed, as you rightly pointed out in a lesson we observed together, resulting in pupils being less engaged than they should be. The work you have done to improve teaching has not been as effective in helping your children to write better, and this area should receive more attention.

You provide strong, energetic leadership and a clear sense of purpose. You have introduced well-organised and clear systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching. The improvement plan is detailed and shows good organisation. Leaders regularly use information about how well pupils are doing to evaluate whether the plan is bringing about improvement. Your plan mainly focuses on how to improve

learning in English and mathematics. Although this is very important, it is also vital that all other subjects are also developed, so these require additional attention.

The leadership team is well organised and developing well under your stewardship. You and your colleagues work effectively together and use each other's skills well to bring improvement. For example, changes made to the provision for pupils with behavioural, emotional or social issues have paid dividends. It is good to see you seeking to develop middle leaders in charge of subjects. Again, the main focus of this has been in English and mathematics. It is important that you also develop leaders of other subjects to ensure depth and strength in the curriculum as a whole.

You and your senior leaders have considered the new National Curriculum and how you plan to assess pupils in the future. You are making good progress in how you will do this in English and mathematics, with learning based around 'topics'. You are, however, much less clear about other subjects, and it is important you sharpen this as you seek to develop the whole curriculum to be deeper and more engaging. As you rightly pointed out, pupils engage with great enthusiasm and interest during the opportunities you give them to learn outside or when on educational visits.

Following an external review, the governing body has improved its work. New governors with relevant skills have been recruited. Governors have recently taken part in useful training and have a better understanding of the school. For example, they know how the pupil premium grant is spent and what impact it has. They are also clearer about how they intend to hold the school to account in the future.

The local authority has provided regular and appropriate support to the school since the previous inspection. Its statement of action is clear and links well with the school's own development plan. Leaders at all levels have benefited from local authority support. I was pleased to see the local authority's continuing commitment to support the school on its improvement journey.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Medway. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes
Seconded Inspector