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Jo Cook
Headteacher
Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School
Whitaker Close
Retford
DN22 7QH

Dear Mrs Cook

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 month and year. 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and with the Governing Body. A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority. I toured the school, visiting all classrooms and holding conversations with pupils. I scrutinised a sample of children's 'learning journeys' from the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils' workbooks from Key Stage 1. I looked at a summary of the school's most-recent data on the pupils' achievement, the school's post-inspection action plan and draft school improvement plan were evaluated.

Main findings

You have completed vital work to secure the leadership and staffing structure for September. In addition, the governing body is increasingly knowledgeable about what is happening at the school and influential in setting the direction for the school's improvement.

You are now setting higher expectations regarding the pupil's achievement. You have been able to do this because you track how well the pupils are doing more closely than previously. You have made sure that the staff are more aware of what the school's data on the pupils' achievement are indicating. This represents a major change in the mindset at the school.

You have made a substantial investment in outdoor equipment to help children in the Early Years Foundation stage with their reading and writing. Greater use of the outdoor area was apparent during this visit than was evident at the last inspection.

The children's 'learning journeys' show much clearer records of their achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in a broader range of areas of learning than was the case before the inspection. In Keys Stage 1, the quality of the marking of pupils' work has improved. Marking is completed frequently, although the teachers' comments are still not always sufficiently precise, or offer clear enough guidance to the pupils on what to improve. When there has been helpful guidance, however, it was evident that the pupils are getting much more opportunity to correct errors, or practise skills. They are making better progress, as a result.

Governors have noted better behaviour in lessons, when they have visited the school. In the lessons I saw briefly, the pupils were concentrating on their work.

The school's data show notable improvements in the pupils' achievement in reading and writing, but less so in mathematics. There are signs that the pupils for whom the school receives additional government funding known as the pupil premium are catching up with other pupils at the school. The governors report that parents are getting more involved with the school, because of improvements in the quality of leadership and management.

The school's short-term action plan has focused carefully on the areas for improvement from the inspection and, rightly emphasises improving the achievement of the pupils. It does not make clear enough, however, the times when all of the planned actions are intended to happen, which makes it difficult for leaders and the governing body to check that the school is on track to become good, or better, by the next inspection. The draft action plan for the next phase of improvement has not been completed.

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

Well-focused and very effective work by the local authority education improvement adviser has been essential in bringing about the improvements at the school, including in governance. A partnership has been arranged with another, outstanding school, which has already resulted in useful professional development opportunities for the staff at Hallcroft, which they are using to make improvements to the teaching, for example, in the use of questioning. You are, in addition, making effective use of pre-existing links with other schools, which have assisted in bringing improvements in subject leadership at Hallcroft.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for insert local authority name and as below.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss

Her Majesty's Inspector