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Miss Karen Wallace
Headteacher
King's Ford Junior School
Gloucester Avenue
Shrub End
Colchester
CO2 9AZ

Dear Miss Wallace

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of King's Ford Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 15 September, 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 March 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, two governors and a representative of the local authority. I spoke to the Chair of the Governing Body by telephone. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated. I analysed your records of pupils' attainment and progress and records of monitoring teaching and learning. We visited all classes, looked at pupils' books and spoke to them about their work.

Context

Since the last inspection the school has continued to grow and has an additional class. One teacher has left the school and three new teachers with key leadership roles have taken up post. Five new teaching assistants have been appointed.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You and the deputy headteacher, supported by governors, are working with determination to improve the school. The steps you have taken to distribute responsibilities to an increasingly strong leadership team have enabled you both to concentrate more directly on improving teaching, learning and achievement. Your analysis is thorough because you have increased the frequency and detail of review; as a consequence, most teachers are already taking action to support the pupils they need to be targeting to make more rapid progress this term. You have agreed 'non-negotiable' expectations of teaching and classroom practice, implemented a new marking policy, agreed higher standards for pupils' presentation of their work and implemented clear guidelines for pupils' progress in mathematics and writing.

This action is beginning to have the desired impact. Evaluation from the summer term shows that achievement is improving and standards reached by the end of Year 6 are the highest they have been for several years. However, progress is too slow in some areas where teaching remains weak. Some teachers are having difficulty improving their practice to meet your expectations. Where they are implementing the increased expectations, classroom environments are supporting learning better and pupils are more engaged in their learning.

Your action plan includes appropriate targets and you have implemented more rigorous procedures for monitoring the steps taken to achieve them. The plan does, however, lack sufficient detail to ensure that staff and governors are absolutely clear about what the expected outcomes are as a result of the actions you are taking.

Governors have received training on understanding pupil-achievement data and demonstrate an increasingly thorough knowledge of the school's improvements. They have worked closely with the deputy headteacher to understand pupils' progress and attainment, and know how the funding received to enhance provision for disadvantaged pupils is used. They use external support and advice to ensure the school's judgements are accurate. Their work to monitor the success of actions taken is not linked directly enough to the priorities identified in the action plan. Governors have contributed to the local authority led Improvement Board meetings and are working hard to ensure good transition from the infant school to the junior school.

The local authority statement of action, put together collaboratively with you, matches the school's action plans well. An Improvement Board, implemented to monitor improvement across your school and the infant school, is strengthening the transition of pupils between schools, monitoring improvement and increasing the exchange of accurate and useful assessment information. You have also used your local knowledge to broker tailor-made specialist teacher support from a local teaching-school alliance. A range of external partners, including local authority advisers are providing support; this is appropriately focused on the areas most needing improvement.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's action 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 Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector