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Mrs Lynn Lowe
Headteacher
Newtons Primary School
Lowen Road
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Dear Mrs Lowe

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Newtons Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 June 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:

- seek support for governors from an outstanding governing body to share good practice and further develop governors' skill in checking the work of the school to improve the achievement of pupils.
- seek out opportunities for senior and middle leaders to work with colleagues in outstanding schools, to further sharpen their skills in monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions in the improvement plan.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders and subject leaders, a group of pupils and members of the governing body. I also held discussions with a representative of the local authority about the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and looked at a range of evidence including minutes of governing body meetings, reports from the local authority, information on pupils' achievement and sampled pupils' work. You accompanied me on a tour of the school, which had a particular focus on how well learning activities engaged and challenged pupils.

Context

Since the inspection in June 2014, three newly qualified teachers have joined the school. They all worked for a short period before the summer break. This helped them get to know their classes so that a rapid start could be made to the new school year. A further part-time teacher has also been appointed to work for three afternoons each week. The school has also appointed two additional learning support assistants to work with identified underachieving pupils during afternoon sessions.

Main findings

You, senior leaders and governors have taken decisive action to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. There is now a sharper focus on checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. You are acting quickly to address those areas which need the most improvement, such as the way that leaders use assessment information to plan interventions and hold teachers accountable. This is helping to improve pupils' learning. You are taking greater account of assessment information and work in pupils' books when you evaluate the quality of teaching. You have revised the school improvement plan; it is detailed and identifies clearly a range of appropriate actions to bring about improvements. The plan has clear milestones and measurable targets, particularly in improving the quality of teaching. However, the plan does not relate progress of the key priorities to measurable improvements in pupils' progress and attainment across the school.

You have ensured that all staff have progress data to inform their planning and work with pupils. You have introduced a coaching system, so that teachers help each other by sharing planning, to make sure all pupils are suitably challenged. You have also deployed the co-ordinator for special educational needs and/or disabilities to work with teachers to sharpen their classroom practice. The partnership with Brookside Infant School has already begun to influence the learning environment and practices in the Early Years and Foundation Stage. You are carrying out mutual moderation exercises to refine assessment. These strategies support precise planning to help children make better progress.

A wide range of pupils confirmed that they enjoy their learning, including literacy and mathematics. However, some pupils told me that their work is sometimes too easy.

Despite the short time since the previous inspection, work in pupils' books is beginning to show the impact of the changes you have made to marking and feedback. Marking is not yet consistent. However, most books showed that pupils knew what to do to improve their work. Teachers are providing time for pupils to respond to their marking.

Governors have increased their understanding of pupil progress and attainment data. However, they do not yet gather first-hand evidence of school practice by, for example, visiting classrooms and looking at pupils' work. A review of governance is due for completion during September. The Chair of the Governing Body fully appreciates the need to address the recommendations coming from the final report.

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 effective support thus far in ensuring the school focusses on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. It has used its powers to appoint an additional governor to provide further experience. This is helping governors to hold senior leaders to account. In addition to the support brokered for the school, the local authority will continue to challenge the school through monthly challenge meetings.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector