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Mr Ian Walker
Headteacher
Hill Avenue Primary School
Hill Avenue
Lanesfield
Wolverhampton
WV4 6PY

Dear Mr Walker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hill Avenue Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 September 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- Produce an improvement plan that focusses on the key improvement areas identified by the last inspection report and local authority review
- Report to the governing body on the outcomes from the recent inspection and local authority review, the school's plan to address the issues identified, and the most recent test and assessment results.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the, pupils, three members of the Governing Body including the chair and former chair, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. An early draft of the school improvement plan was evaluated. Other documents were scrutinised including the latest achievement data analysis, Governing Body minutes, and the outcome of the local authority review from June 2014.

Context

Since the last inspection both the headteacher and deputy headteacher left the school in July 2014. The chair of the Governing Body stepped down in July 2014 and a new chair was appointed on 10 September 2014. An interim headteacher was appointed from September 2014 who has subsequently been appointed as substantive headteacher from January 2015. Two interim assistant headteachers have been appointed for one term initially from September 2014. There is a vacancy for a deputy headteacher position. One teacher left the school in July 2014. There are two new teachers who started in September 2014, one of whom is teacher cover for the deputy headteacher position.

Main findings

There is no evidence of any action that was taken by school leaders in immediate response to the last inspection report or the local authority review which took place a week before the inspection in June 2014. Governing body minutes do not indicate any formal discussion with the then leaders in meetings that took place in the summer term. None of the current leaders were in position in the summer term and as they have only been in post for less than a month they have not had enough time to demonstrate their impact.

Since the start of this term governors met in September but again did not discuss formally outcomes from the inspection or the local authority review. The interim headteacher presented a report but this did not refer to the school's response. The improvement plan is at an early draft stage and has not been shared with governors. The results of tests and assessments for 2014 have not yet been presented to the governing body.

As the local authority accurately predicted in its wide ranging review, the school is now considerably below the floor standard for attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 based on the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014. It is also likely to be below the floor targets for progress as well when the national averages are published. The proportion of pupils making two levels progress from Key Stage 1 to 2 in 2014 were below in reading, writing and mathematics when compared to the national median for 2013.

The initial analysis of data by the new leaders has revealed considerable underachievement at Key Stage 2, particularly in Years 3 and 4 and the proportion of pupils achieving more than expected progress in Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics, was exceptionally low.

In a very short space of time you and your senior colleagues have had an immediate impact on improving pupils' appearance and the presentation of their written work. The weakest teaching in Key Stage 2 has now been removed. Pupils also report an improvement in more pupils listening in lessons which in their view have improved, except in science. Pupils said that topic work was not as challenging as literacy and mathematics and they said that at present there were no lessons in art, design and technology or information communication and technology.

Training has been held on improving marking but it is too early for the newly appointed leaders to have tackled weakness identified in the teaching of writing, and providing opportunities for literacy and numeracy in other subjects.

Plans are in place to conduct formal teacher observations, further data analysis and pupil progress meetings. Arrangements have been made to train teachers on getting to good and to arrange support with a local successful school but all of this is at a very early stage of development.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

The HMI has serious concerns about the insufficiency of the actions being taken by the school, and was unable to meet with the full governing body, so will return to the school to do so as soon as soon as possible.

External support

Relations with the local authority have previously been strained, in part over the outcomes of the local authority review conducted just before the inspection. The school has chosen its own school for external support rather than that suggested by the local authority although the local authority is continuing to provide rigorous challenge and support to the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector