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Laraine Hodgson
Headteacher
Longmeadow Primary School
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Broadwater
Stevenage
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Dear Ms Hodgson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Longmeadow Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 October 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 May 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- improve how accurately all teachers assess pupils' writing
- ensure that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, a subject leader, six members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school action plan and the school's assessment information. You accompanied me during visits to all classes in the school where we observed teaching and looked at pupils' work.

Context

Since the inspection four teachers have left the school and have been replaced by four newly qualified teachers. A new teaching assistant has also been appointed.

Main findings

Your improvement plans are clear and are focused on raising standards. You have improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection. For example, the feedback and guidance that pupils receive is now good across the school. Pupils value the feedback they receive from teachers and some are responding to it with their own evaluative comments. Teachers who have joined the school since September have settled well and all classrooms are calm and productive learning environments. Your plans to improve the accuracy of assessment have started to work, as teachers are more precisely identifying the standards that pupils are reaching in their writing. There is more to do here, as a work scrutiny showed that there is still too much variation in the quality of pupils' work that teachers assess to be of the same standard. For example, the writing of a pupil who was using complex sentences, with a range of punctuation and accurate spelling was assessed at the same level as another pupil who is writing simple sentences with little punctuation and frequent spelling errors.

Teachers are much more focused on improving the quality of writing now, and there are clear signs in pupils' books that standards are starting to improve. The quality of pupils' writing is now broadly in line with age-related expectations in all year groups other than Year 6, where it remains low. In contrast, standards in reading and mathematics are above age-related expectations across the school. You have introduced a new way of setting targets for pupils and this is accelerating progress in some classes more than in others. For example, pupils in some classes are provided with very precise targets which are bespoke to individual pupils and can be achieved in a fixed period. Pupils in these classes understand that they have an important role to play in meeting their targets and most are very keen to do so. In other classes targets are the same for large groups of pupils, are much less precise and do not challenge the more-able pupils.

Subject leaders are spending more time monitoring learning. In literacy, for example, the subject leader has a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve this area and is gathering evidence through work scrutiny and looking at teachers' planning. The workload is large in this subject, as it covers English, literacy and writing across the curriculum. More support is needed to ensure that the pace of improvement is both rapid and sustained.

Governors have increased their profile in the school. An 'Action Committee', consisting of a small group of governors and all senior leaders, meets regularly to monitor progress against the improvement plan. This work includes discussions with

staff and pupils, visits to classrooms and looking at pupils' work. This has effectively helped the governing body to become more aware of the improvements that have been achieved as well as the challenges that remain.

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 is providing an appropriate level of support for the school. Since the inspection its involvement has increased and now includes specific support for literacy, assessment, improving teaching and leadership. This is helping to tackle some of the main issues identified at the inspection and is an integral part of the school's improvement plans.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Moodie
Her Majesty's Inspector