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Mrs Janet Haseldine
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Haseldine

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leigh Primary School, Tameside

Following my visit to your school on 21 October 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:

- make sure that the learning objectives for each lesson are always written in language that pupils can understand; so that pupils are clear about their teachers' expectations
- ensure that when pupils achieve their targets these are then changed in order to provide them with timely and fresh challenges in order to accelerate their progress
- bring all marking in the school up to the standard of the best so that opportunities for pupils to learn from their mistakes are maximised
- make sure that the learning journals for children in the Nursery Year are comprehensive and kept up-to-date
- clarify the timescales for each of the targets in the school's post-Ofsted action plan so that it is clear which targets are the most important and should be done first

- make sure that all the milestones in the action plan are sharp so that senior leaders and governors can easily measure the progress being made against each of the school's improvement priorities.

Evidence

During my visit I held separate meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, the teacher with management responsibility for the Early Years and Foundation Stage and three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also met with a representative of the local authority and a group of charming and articulate Year 6 pupils. I scrutinised the work in a sample of pupils' books to evaluate the quality of teachers' marking and how challenging the work is for pupils. I examined the school's post-Ofsted action plan, the minutes of the most recent governors' meeting and the single central record of the checks that senior leaders make on the suitability of adults to work with children. You also accompanied me on a tour of the school where I took the opportunity to introduce myself to many of your colleagues and observe the children at work.

Context

Two teachers joined the staff at the start of this term and both are working in Key Stage 1. The Early Years and Foundation Stage manager is new to the post and commenced duty in September; as did a teacher employed on a temporary basis to work in the same phase.

Main findings

The teachers and governors that I met agreed that the judgement of inspectors at the most recent inspection was the right one for the school, providing a firm foundation on which to base plans to move the school forward on its journey to good.

The school's learning environment is bright and colourful, enhanced by the many displays of pupils' art work. This demonstrates the positive impact that the artist in residence is having on developing pupils' drawing and painting skills. Pupils' respect for their school is evidenced by the well-kept displays, and a site that is litter and graffiti free.

During our tour of the school we made a number of short visits to lessons. In the lessons visited I saw evidence that teachers had planned different activities in an attempt to meet the needs of the different groups in the class. These observations were further reinforced by the work I saw in a sample of pupils' books. This reflects senior leaders' drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring teachers' planning takes into account pupils' level of ability. However, you are aware that this practice is inconsistent. Some teaching requires further improvement, and

quickly, to make sure that all pupils are suitably challenged in lessons in order to accelerate their progress.

The work scrutiny revealed that teachers consistently share the learning objectives with the pupils at the start of each lesson. These describe what each lesson is about and what pupils are expected to learn. However, some of these learning objectives are not written in language that is easily understood by pupils. Consequently, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in particular lessons are not always clear.

Those pupils with whom I spoke during my visit know what their targets are in each of their core subjects and could describe what they need to do to achieve them. Pupils' individual and group targets are prominently displayed in each classroom, acting as effective reminders. However, there are instances where pupils have achieved an individual target but their targets have not been revised to reflect this, thereby slowing their progress.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and in line with school policy, however there are some inconsistencies. In the best examples teachers give feedback on the strengths of a piece of work and what the pupil needs to do to make it better. The pupils then act on this advice in 'make a difference' known as 'MAD' time. Conversely, there are examples where teachers' suggestions for improvement have either been ignored or the pupil's response is superficial so that learning that has taken place as a result has not been sustained; with the same mistakes being repeated in later work. Furthermore, there are inconsistencies evident in the marking of spelling. In some books incorrectly spelt words have not been identified by the teacher, in others, opportunities for pupils to make the necessary corrections and so learn from their mistakes have been missed.

The newly appointed manager for the Early Years and Foundation Stage is already beginning to address some of the areas for improvement identified at the most recent inspection. The indoor learning environment has been improved and senior leaders' monitoring records indicate that teaching is much more focused and has a tighter structure than was the case in the past. As a result children are less likely to 'flit' from one activity to another but sustain their interest in one area of learning. However, it is too early to assess the impact of these new ways of working on rates of children's development. Children's progress is monitored using a range of strategies with the evidence brought together in each child's learning journal. However, the latter are more comprehensive and up-to-date for children in the Reception Year than they are for children in the Nursery. As a result there is not enough tangible information to determine each child's rate of progress during their first term in the school.

The post-Ofsted action plan is comprehensive and provides senior leaders and governors with an effective strategy for addressing each of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors at the previous inspection. The plan is closely

monitored and the actions being taken, evaluated by senior leaders and governors, to determine their impact. However, the plan is relatively new and you and your colleagues recognise that much of what has been introduced needs to become established practice before measurable gains in pupils' outcomes can be gauged. Although the plan is detailed, timescales for each of the actions described in it are not always clear. Consequently, it is difficult to determine which actions are the most important and therefore being tackled first. In addition some of the milestones in the plan are not sharp enough. For example, it is difficult for governors to determine, during the life of the plan, whether the school is on track to achieve its end of year targets for pupils' achievement at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

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 appropriate support to the school on its journey of improvement. They have supported the leaders' use of an external consultant who is working effectively with the recently appointed manager for the Early Years and Foundation Stage. Although this partnership is relatively new it has resulted in improved provision for children in the Nursery and Reception Years. Senior leaders have been successful in securing funding to help them provide training for subject leaders. This is in order to help subject leaders increase their skills and involvement in checking the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

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

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry
Her Majesty's Inspector