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Ms Victoria Morris, Headteacher
Elm Park Primary School
South End Road
Hornchurch
RM12 5UA

Dear Ms Morris

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Elm Park Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 November 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 July 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:

- develop collaboration between middle leaders with a local outstanding school to sharpen practices that improve teaching
- arrange further training for governors so they can improve the use of assessment information to challenge and support the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of pupils, two members of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated

together with a range of school documents. Short visits were made to 8 lessons. Informal discussions were held with pupils and I examined the work in their books.

Context

Since the last inspection 5 permanent members of staff have left the school and were replaced ready for the beginning of the autumn term. The headteacher has refined and clarified the areas of responsibilities for senior leaders.

Main findings

Senior leaders now have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This is helping them to check the quality of learning frequently and thoroughly. As a consequence, teachers are being held to account for how well pupils learn. Senior leaders check on planning frequently. This is leading to greater consistency in the quality of planning and supports pupils of all abilities to learn well. Visits to classrooms confirmed that activities engaged and interested pupils. They told me that they work harder this year but also enjoy their learning more.

School leaders have made explicit their expectations of how teachers should mark and check carefully that this is done. This is leading to greater consistency to the advice and feedback that pupils receive. It contributes to the progress seen in their books during my visits to classrooms. Pupils told me that they understand what they have to do to respond to teachers' marking. The work I saw in pupils' books is consistently well presented. This reflects the pride in their learning that pupils told me about when I spoke with them. In almost all cases, pupils respond regularly to teachers' marking and this is helping them improve their learning. Pupils are provided with a number of opportunities to write longer passages. Scrutiny of their books showed me that many students are making good progress this year so far. However this is not yet consistently the case for all students

Visits to classrooms showed that teachers have increasingly high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They have established clear routines for learning. As a consequence, pupils work together positively. Pupils are keen to learn, offer their views and are ready to listen to others. These behaviours are improving their learning. In Key Stage 2 lesson, high quality discussion between pupils helped them solve problems in mathematics and improved their skills quickly.

The school's renewed policy for spelling is being applied consistently by teachers. This is helping pupils to put right some of their mistakes. Senior leaders have monitored how effectively this being done and, as a consequence, have changed their plans to include teaching more clearly about how to learn spellings.

Leaders for mathematics and literacy work closely with other senior staff and teachers to establish and develop good practice in these areas. This has led to

sharper work on phonics, supported by the local authority. Their work is contributing to the key school priorities on planning and marking.

School planning is to the point. It addresses directly the areas that need to improve identified at the last inspection. It has specific targets to help leaders and governors check that the school's improvement is good enough. The plan is carefully prioritised to increase performance step by step. For example, focussed work to develop middle leaders' skills is scheduled to start before the end of this term. Governors are playing a greater role in monitoring school performance and gathering their own evidence about how well pupils learn. Governors do not yet review the progress pupils are making frequently enough.

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's support to the school is effective. The school improvement partner has contributed to the school's improving systems for monitoring. Specialist consultants, for example in literacy, are contributing to the improvements being made in planning. The local authority formally challenges the school at half-termly review meetings. This helps the school ensure that improvement is sustained and improves pupils' performance.

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