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Mr Colin Pickard
Acting Headteacher
Someries Junior School
Wigmore Lane
Luton
LU2 8AH

Dear Mr Pickard

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Someries Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2013. 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:

- enable team leaders to take full responsibility for improving teaching by giving them more opportunity to work alongside teachers and to observe teaching in the other classes.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, members of the governing body, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated, information about pupils' learning was reviewed and responses to parent surveys were examined. A number of short visits to lessons

in all classes were undertaken where I looked at pupils' books and talked to them informally.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in December 2013 the headteacher has left the school and you were appointed as acting headteacher. A teacher already working in the school was appointed to the post of acting deputy headteacher. Four teachers joined the school in September to replace those that have left.

Main findings

You have worked effectively with the governing body and the local authority to strengthen teaching, behaviour and achievement. Teachers and pupils appreciate that you and the acting deputy headteacher are visibly and explicitly leading by example when setting high expectations. Middle leaders are also developing into effective leaders. However they do not have enough opportunity to observe members of their team teaching. As they are responsible for the quality of teaching across the year groups it is important that they are given this opportunity. Management procedures to improve teaching, to hold teachers to account for their performance and to check the progress of pupils are effective and efficient.

You have strengthened the relationship between parents and the school. The regular questionnaires returned by parents show an increasingly positive picture. These responses indicate that parents are happy that the management of behaviour and bullying is now much more effective than it was a year ago.

There are a number of positive features of teaching. Relationships between adults and pupils are productive and respectful. Teachers demonstrate well developed subject knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. The work that pupils complete is generally pitched at the right level for them and marking is much improved. Teaching assistants are also making a strong contribution to learning in lessons. Consequently, progress in reading, writing and mathematics is accelerating and presentation, spelling and handwriting are improving.

Behaviour management is much better because the school's policy is adhered to by all staff. Pupils understand the systems for reward and sanctions and believe that they are carried out fairly. Pupils behave very well in class. They are eager to learn and work hard.

Tracking information shows that progress is accelerating and standards overall are higher than they were in 2013. Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as others in the school. The proportion of pupils that exceed the expected rate of progress is increasing. While the standards of punctuation, spelling and grammar were below average in 2014, work in books now shows that the steps that are being taken to raise these standards are successful. You are rightfully working on improving the

achievement of the most able and interventions such as booster groups are popular with pupils.

The governing body has learnt a lot over the last year about their responsibilities when holding school leaders to account. They demonstrate that they are now much more effective at doing this. For example, the monthly school improvement meeting is challenging and supportive in ensuring that you are taking the right actions. Governors demonstrate that they understand the strategic role that they play within the school.

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 made a major contribution to the strengthening of leadership and performance of the school. They and the governors now demonstrate a much more effective working partnership than in the past. The regular visits from the school improvement officer and consultants for mathematics and writing have been of real help to you and other teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow

Her Majesty's Inspector