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Mrs Gemma Elliott
Headteacher
Castlefields Infant School
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HD6 3XB

Dear Mrs Elliot

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Castlefields Infant School, Calderdale

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 June 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.

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:

- redraft the school improvement plan, indicating clearly:
 - which aspects of teaching and provision need to be improved
 - how leaders are going to take action to bring about improvement
 - what measures of success are expected as a result of leaders' actions and how these will be monitored and evaluated
 - the precise measures and milestones of successful progress that will enable governors to hold leaders to account on the journey to 'good'.
- ensure that monitoring activities focus clearly on evaluating the impact of initiatives and the difference they are making to pupils' outcomes.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders, four members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated. Documents relating to monitoring activities, minutes of governing body meetings and reports from monitoring by the local authority were scrutinised and you accompanied me on a tour of the school.

Context

Since the inspection a temporary teacher left and a permanent teacher took up post in September 2014. A new governor has joined the governing body.

Main findings

Although disappointed, leaders and governors accept the findings of the recent report and acknowledge that there is still further work to do to ensure the school secures a 'good' judgement at its next inspection. Plans are afoot to bid for support from a local teaching school to develop work in improving pupils' writing. However this is still in the planning stage and needs to move swiftly to ensure the school is getting on with making improvements so they can see the results they aspire to.

Middle leaders have engaged in a range of monitoring activities including scrutiny of pupils' work, learning walks, paired observations with the headteacher and monitoring of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and those who are most able. However, the extent to which their observations evaluate carefully the impact of their actions and initiatives is underdeveloped. As a result, the focus of these activities has not been precise enough and evidence of the improvements required and the difference they are making is not yet clear enough. This is not helped by weaknesses in the school's improvement plans.

Leaders governors and the local authority all agree that the current plans are not fit for purpose. Concerted action is required to ensure the plans:

- indicate which aspects of teaching and provision need to be improved
- explain how leaders are going to take action to bring about improvement
- set out clearly what success is expected as a result of leaders' action and how this will be monitored and evaluated
- show the precise measures and milestones of successful progress that will enable governors to hold leaders to account.

Leaders have attended governors meetings and presented information about their areas of responsibility. Governors have asked appropriate questions which are challenging and clearly minuted. However, governors accept that they need to dig further into the

responses they receive from leaders to ensure they uncover what impact leaders are having.

The addition of a new governor has brought additional skills and expertise to the governing body. They are aware that there are still vacancies that have not been filled. In response to this they have begun to consider a process of reconstituting the governing body to ensure it is more appropriate for the size of the school. The succession of the next Chair of the Governing Body has already been considered and gives a useful opportunity to ensure a smooth transition for the next Chair.

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

A new school effectiveness officer has been allocated to the school. She has already attended a governing body meeting and reported back on the work carried out with leaders in auditing the provision in the Reception classes. Scrutiny of pupils' work, alongside the SENCO has highlighted improvements needed in the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and those who are most-able. Plans to work with a National Leader of Education are being considered alongside the school's bid to work with a local teaching school.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy
Her Majesty's Inspector