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Mr R Hudson
Headteacher
Falconhurst School
High Trees
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Milton Keynes
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Dear Mr Hudson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Falconhurst School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 September 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:

- ensure that information about pupils' progress is collected and analysed by the end of this term
- state in the action plan who is responsible for completing each action
- provide training for middle leaders.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I went on a tour of the school with your deputy headteacher visiting every class and talked to pupils. I evaluated a range of

documentation including the school 'quality plan' (improvement plan), information related to the monitoring of teaching, and records of governors' meetings. I looked at a selection of pupils' books.

Context

An additional teacher has been employed part time to work in Year 6.

Main findings

The 'quality plan' focusses well on the areas for improvement. The targets set are logical to bring about the required change. Success criteria are measurable and milestones marking progress toward them are realistic. The plan states clearly who will be responsible for monitoring and when that is to happen. It would be further strengthened by clearly stating exactly who is responsible for completing each of the actions.

There is evidence that pupils are beginning to attain more highly in Key Stage 2. However, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 have many significant gaps in their learning that need working on, particularly in writing and mathematics. As a school you are well aware of this and have sensibly put in additional teaching staff in order to address the deficit. This is already beginning to have a positive impact on the standard of work pupils are producing, although there is much work to be done.

Pupils across all year groups are becoming more productive. In books there is evidence of teachers' expectations being raised and pupils being given more challenges to encourage further thinking, such as in Year 2, adding using larger numbers.

Marking is developing, with teachers providing encouragement but also getting pupils to practise a skill such as letter formation in Year 1 or to use alliteration in Year 4. It is good that pupils are now being given the opportunity on a weekly basis to respond to marking, giving them the chance to improve their work.

As a school you are bringing the curriculum to life, for example by arranging for the Year 6 classes to work with the Police for a week on the topic of 'crime and punishment'. This gave pupils a range of opportunities linked to real life situations such as writing a report and 'presenting a case in court'. The Year 3 class enjoyed writing a piece about their trip to Whipsnade Zoo the previous day, and the Year 4 class working on perimeters outside in the playground found using 'real' measurements useful.

The re- structuring of phase leaders (leaders of year-groups) is beginning to have a positive impact on work in classes. Middle leaders are beginning to take on monitoring of pupils' progress through learning walks, book scrutinies and work with

teachers on planning. This is a positive beginning but these staff will need training and support to have real impact.

Monitoring by senior leaders and training for staff is closely linked to the areas identified for improvement and is helping the school to move forward. Information on pupil progress has not been collected yet this term because of changes to the curriculum and assessment. This needs to be collected and analysed as a matter of urgency so that as leaders you can track pupils' progress and ensure that teachers are clear about what each child in their class needs to achieve.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors are new to the posts this term. They are already working closely with senior leaders and the local authority to support but also challenge the school and hold it to account in order to secure rapid improvement. After the external review booked for later this month, governors rightly intend reviewing their skills before appointing further members.

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 effective support by working directly with leadership at all levels in school and by actively brokering support from other schools. Monitoring and challenge is being provided through the 'Targeted Intervention Board'.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson
Seconded Inspector