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Mrs Kathy Maguire-Egan
Headteacher
Oakwood Infant School
Windsor Avenue
Clacton-on-Sea
CO15 2AH

Dear Mrs Maguire-Egan

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oakwood Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 9 December 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.

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 the work that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils with special educational needs complete is pitched at the right level to maximise their learning
- give pupils the time to respond to feedback and make the necessary changes to their work, sharing the good practice that already exists within the school.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other leaders, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I made brief visits to a number of lessons and looked at the way teachers give pupils feedback about their work. I evaluated the school's improvement plans and documents relating to the outcomes of monitoring activities and the impact of performance management.

Context

The previous headteacher left the school at the end of the 2013-14 academic year; you have been in post since September 2014.

Main findings

You have established a series of 'non-negotiables' that make clear the improvements required in a number of areas, including in teaching, pupils' presentation of their work, and the feedback they receive after completing it. All teachers, and teaching assistants, understand these and additional training is helping them to work towards their challenging targets. Changes to the way that leaders monitor the quality of teaching mean checks are sharply focused on how well pupils are learning, including those who need extra help and the more able. Robust and rigorous appraisal arrangements are holding teachers to account for the progress of their pupils over time. Subject and other leaders are making the necessary improvements, and have a clear understanding of the next steps needed to ensure their maximum impact. Governors are supporting the changes you are making, and monitoring progress towards the school's improvement plan targets carefully.

Teachers are using their regular checks on pupils' progress to plan activities that will help most to take the next steps in their learning, though this is less secure in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Not all teachers are ensuring that the work completed by those with special educational needs is of the correct level of challenge. Additional small-group teaching is helping to meet the needs of both the most able, and those who require extra help. The school's monitoring data indicates that the progress of both groups is starting to accelerate. Phonics training has helped teachers and teaching assistants to show pupils how to decode unfamiliar written words by sounding them out.

Pupils are completing pieces of extended writing regularly in different subjects, but are not always given the time to respond to the advice given by teachers. All teachers are showing pupils how to present their work appropriately and regularly emphasise the importance of this; most are starting to make the improvements needed. Changes to the mathematics curriculum mean that pupils regularly use the skills they have learned to solve real-life mathematical problems.

Levels of attendance are increasing because leaders are using a range of effective strategies to engage with parents and underline the impact of absence upon the progress their children make.

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

Local authority representatives are helping you and other leaders to monitor standards and make plans for improvement that address areas of weakness. Training is supporting teachers to develop pupils' literacy skills effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of the Governing Body
cc. Local authority