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Mrs Susan Locke
Headteacher
Milldene Primary School
Barbrook Lane
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Colchester
CO5 0EF

Dear Mrs Locke

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Milldene Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 September 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 that all teachers plan activities for the most able that are sufficiently demanding, so that they make more rapid progress
- enable all pupils to respond to the comments on their work that show them how to improve and take the next steps in their learning
- ensure that governors monitor progress towards the school's improvement priorities carefully and rigorously.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other leaders, the school's improvement partner and members 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

Temporary arrangements have been made to provide teaching within the Early Years Foundation Stage owing to teacher absence. A newly-appointed deputy headteacher has started to work with the school prior to joining the staff in January 2015.

Main findings

You have a clear sense of the school's main priorities for improvement, and are working with other leaders and governors to develop and implement precise plans to address these. Training is enabling all leaders to work with you in raising standards. Teachers are working with teaching assistants, who have also benefited from additional training. Changes to the mathematics calculations policy mean that leaders' expectations about the methods pupils should use for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division are clear; this is helping teachers to implement the new mathematics curriculum.

The monitoring of the quality of teaching is regular, and includes checks on the impact that it is having on the progress pupils make over time. Leaders give detailed feedback about effective aspects of teachers' practice, and support is helping them to make improvements. Regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress keep a focus on the impact of extra support for those who need it. This monitoring indicates that the needs of those pupils with special educational needs are being met. The most able are making less rapid progress than they could because the work they complete is sometimes too easy for them. Teachers' feedback is clear and shows pupils how to improve, but sometimes, pupils do not have time to respond to it, so continue to make the same mistakes.

Leaders have worked to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and minimise the impact of teacher absence. New resources have increased the range of activities that children engage in; additional books are encouraging them to spend more time reading and they are becoming more confident when completing independent written tasks.

Governors have benefited from training that has helped them to understand what data indicates about pupils' progress and attainment. They have devoted additional funds that have improved the learning environment within the Early Years

Foundation Stage. Governors are checking on the progress of groups currently on roll, using the data provided by senior leaders, but arrangements to supplement that information by ensuring individual governors monitor progress towards different aspects of the school's improvement plans are not established.

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 officers have helped subject leaders to refine aspects of their action plans; ongoing training and support is helping to build the confidence and capacity of the leadership team. Training in lesson observation has helped leaders ensure they focus on the impact of teaching on learning, and offer teachers guidance on how to improve. Advisers have helped leaders to plan improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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