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3 December 2014

Paula Evans
Headteacher
Horninglow Primary School
Horninglow Road North
Burton-on-Trent
DE13 0SW

Dear Mrs Evans

Special measures monitoring inspection of Horninglow Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions, which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection, which took place in September 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you as headteacher, along with the deputy headteacher. I met with the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors. In addition, I met with a representative from the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated. I also considered a number of other documents, including the school's safeguarding and child protection policies.

Context

A Local Leader in Education from the trust has been allocated to the school to support the leadership team. A retired headteacher is working with the leadership team as a consultant. The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator was absent during this monitoring inspection owing to ill health.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You continue to undertake a range of monitoring activities, such as short visits to lessons (learning walks) and checking work in pupils' books. A sample of the records of these activities seen during the monitoring visit showed that this work is not used sharply enough to improve teaching and to raise pupils' attainment quickly. Records show descriptions of what has been found and general statements for improvement rather than identifying specific weaknesses in teaching and noting their impact on pupils' progress. For example, leaders do not check whether pupils are being taught correctly, set work at the appropriate level of difficulty, and whether all aspects of the curriculum are being taught across classes and year groups in a way that allows all pupils to make good progress. Examining the impact of more focused visits to lessons will be a part of my next visit.

You have begun to take appropriate steps to tackle the weaknesses in leadership identified in the recent inspection by providing suitable training for leaders. Where support and training have not led to rapid improvement, and with support from the local authority, you have taken suitable action using formal procedures for managing performance.

Arrangements for the teaching of reading are inconsistent. Pupils' records of reading in school and at home remain poor; some pupils have not read to a qualified adult in the past month. Leaders are unaware of the proportion of pupils who have reading skills below their chronological age. Teachers decide on an individual basis how and when to teach reading or to listen to pupils read. This is hindering pupils' progress in developing this vital skill. Work to develop pupils' understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) is not continued into pupils' writing or other activities well enough. Pupils are not provided with effective visual prompts to help them choose the correct 'graphemes' (letters that represent sounds), to write and spell words correctly. For example, the graphemes that can be used to denote the 'sh' sound such as 'ce' as in ocean, 'ch' as in chef are not grouped together, so pupils do not know that there are different ways of representing the same sound. Reading will be a focus of my next visit.

Practices designed to keep pupils safe are not implemented with sufficient rigour. For example, my identity was not checked upon arrival, nor were the basic health and safety guidelines explained to me. Recruitment and vetting checks for intended appointees reflect the Department's guidance on employing staff. Still, leaders are not checking that all paperwork is completed on time and that the information is collated correctly and stored in teachers' personal files. Similarly, the records of actions taken to protect pupils potentially at risk of harm are not kept in accordance with guidelines. It became apparent from my discussions with staff and governors that they are unaware of the school's procedures on dealing with disclosures and allegations of possible abuse. A check of the policy highlighted that there were some

important omissions because it was based on old guidance. In view of these findings, leaders should arrange an external review of the effectiveness of all aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures.

The local authority has devised a plan of action to help the school focus on the main key issues from the inspection. The plan clearly outlines suitable actions and proposes swift and substantial support in a number of areas. However, the plan does not spell out how the local authority will tackle the basic weaknesses in governance highlighted in the inspection report. Given that governance is ineffective, as confirmed by the external review, which found that governors need extensive and substantial support, it seems odd that they are nominated to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders in raising standards. It is worrying that the local authority has not included this in the plan or considered making full use of its powers to improve this key element of leadership. Similarly, the school's improvement plan that runs alongside the local authority's plan of action does not clearly identify how this key area will be improved. Additionally, the school's plan for improvement is too long, although it does include timescales and some indicators to gauge the impact of any actions taken to improve teaching and raise standards. However, some of these measures are ambiguous and imprecise.

A review of the school's use of the government's pupil premium grant (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) has yet to take place to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector