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Mr Phil Lewin
Headteacher
Ibstock Junior School
Melbourne Road
Ibstock
LE67 6NP

Dear Mr Lewin

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Ibstock Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 15 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in October 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, five members of the governing body, a National Leader of Governance, two representatives of the local authority, two representatives from the Forest Way Teaching School Alliance, four members of staff and eight pupils. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. A tour of the school was undertaken with the headteacher. Pupils were spoken to informally about their learning, and their workbooks were checked. Consideration was given to the school's most recent data on pupils' achievement. The school's documentation relating to checks on the quality of teaching were considered. The single central record was checked, as well as other information relation to the safeguarding of pupils.

Context

Since the last inspection, three members of the governing body have resigned; one new governor has been appointed.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders have made a positive start in addressing the issues identified for improvement at the most recent section 5 inspection. They have put in place a programme of coaching and support for each teacher. Teachers say that they are receiving clearer guidance on how to improve the quality of their practice and that regular checks are made to ensure that they are implementing advice. Staff have developed their skills in more accurately assessing pupils' work. This is helping them to provide pupils with learning activities that are set at the right level of difficulty. Teaching assistants have benefited from training delivered by staff from the Forest Way Teaching School Alliance. This has helped them to provide more bespoke support to individual pupils who are falling behind their classmates. Teachers say that they are working more closely with teaching assistants, which is helping to provide better support, particularly to potentially vulnerable pupils. The recently introduced marking code is beginning to provide pupils with clearer feedback on how to improve. Pupils say that the new code is making it easier for them to show how they have refined their work. In particular, this is helping them to improve the quality of their written work. As a result of these changes, the quality of teaching is beginning to improve.

Pupils say that the school's leaders have provided better resources to help them in their learning. The library is equipped with a wider range of books, which is motivating pupils to read more widely. Pupils' skills in computing are being developed more quickly through the regular use of laptops. This is enabling them to record their work in more exciting ways and helping to engage pupils more in their learning. These new resources are supporting pupils' achievement in developing key skills.

Governors have wasted no time in undertaking an external review of their work and their use of the pupil premium funding. A National Leader of Governance is providing expert advice to ensure that a clear framework is in place for governors to provide appropriate levels of support and challenge to senior leaders. Within a short period of time, this has led to: a restructuring of the governing body, whereby the role and responsibility of each governor is clearly defined; a framework for governor training being put in place; the development of a systematic programme of monitoring activities; the development of a school improvement plan that is sharply focused upon the key areas for improvement and contains clear measures of success; and the introduction of a weekly meeting between the Chair of the Governing Body and the headteacher. One governor has taken responsibility for making regular checks on the extent to which funding is providing effective support for disadvantaged

pupils. As a result, governors are in a better position to hold leaders to account for the rate of improvement and the extent to which actions are having the intended impact on pupils' achievement.

The local authority has worked closely with the Forest Way Teaching School Alliance to provide a programme of support which is enabling the statement of action to be implemented. Leadership support for the headteacher from the Teaching School Alliance is helping to ensure that changes in the school are managed at an appropriate pace. The local authority Improvement Partner is making regular checks on developments and is supporting leaders in making accurate checks on the quality of teaching. The frequent 'team around the school meetings' enable all partners to share their views on the rate of improvement, measured against the success criteria as set out in the statement of action. This is helping to identify any additional support to ensure that the school is on track to achieve its aim of improving quickly and within the set timescale. Given the positive start that the school has made, it is clear that the external support provided to the school is proving effective at this stage.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

The school's improvement action plan is fit for purpose

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose

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

Yours sincerely

David Carter

Her Majesty's Inspector

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where the school is an academy)

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure that teachers use all assessment information effectively to provide high-quality, learning activities for all groups of pupils that build on previous learning and encourage pupils to work things out for themselves
 - giving teaching assistants the skills and training they need to promote good progress and checking the impact of their work
 - ensuring that marking is always helpful and that teachers check that pupils act on advice given to improve their work.

- Raise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - giving pupils the skills to be able to read unfamiliar words and to understand what they read
 - providing opportunities for pupils to apply their reading skills in their writing and in their work in mathematics, and to use and extend all of these basic skills in other subjects.

- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - extending the role and influence of subject leaders, ensuring that they have the skills and the opportunities to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement in their subjects
 - making better use of the pupil premium grant to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring that governors undertake appropriate training and receive support in order to be able to challenge the school and drive the improvement that the school requires.

An external review of governance and an external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.