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Ms Kaye Gilzene
Headteacher
Waterfield Primary School
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Dear Ms Gilzene

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Waterfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 January 2015, 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 November 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:

- strengthen the school improvement plan to make it clear what will happen, by when, how progress will be checked and impact evaluated
- clarify the responsibilities for leading, monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions in all of the school's plans.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior team, middle leaders, the Chair of Governors and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. You took me on a tour of the school and I visited

each class. The school's plans for improvement were evaluated, together with records from leaders' monitoring of teaching and pupils' work. I looked at a range of other documents and some pupils' books.

Main findings

You have acted quickly and effectively since the inspection, ably assisted by your senior team. Your reorganisation of the responsibilities of senior and middle leaders has improved systems for monitoring the progress of pupils and evaluating the impact of actions taken. As a result, teachers and leaders are increasingly held to account for meeting the needs of individual pupils and improving their achievement, although intended outcomes need to be clearer. There are early signs that pupils' progress is improving.

You have rightly focussed on improving the quality of lesson planning so that it matches the skills the teachers want the pupils to learn. Teachers are tracking the progress made by pupils more closely, so have a better understanding of what each pupil needs to learn. Lesson plans show how the activities carried out by different groups of pupils are designed to help them improve. Additional challenge is planned to stretch the most able pupils, although questions do not probe their understanding deeply enough. During lessons, teachers check how well pupils are progressing and alter their plans to tackle any misconceptions. A review of the support provided for pupils with special educational needs has been carried out. Pupils are now being supported well by additional adults in lessons. Teaching assistants use teachers' plans to help less able pupils achieve the learning targets set for them.

You have changed the school day so that there are longer lessons, without interruptions. Assembly is now at the end of the day to allow more time for teachers and pupils to check what has been learned during lessons and identify any gaps in knowledge or understanding. All teachers provide pupils with detailed improvement points in their books and pupils respond to the advice given to improve their work.

The school's plans for improvement are in several different documents and, as a result, there is no overview to make sure that everything is covered during the year. Plans outline appropriate actions but lack sufficient detail for leaders and governors to hold staff to account. Bringing the documents together into one coherent school improvement plan would help to keep the plan on track. The plan would be more robust if the staff responsible for leading activities were not the same people monitoring their implementation. Governors oversee the school's work and visit regularly to check progress. However, the governors' role in evaluating the impact of the school improvement plan is not clear enough.

There has been concerted action to improve the teaching of reading. All staff have been trained to teach phonics, (the sounds that letters make). Pupils in Key Stage 1 are now grouped according to their skills so that teaching can focus precisely on

what they need to learn. The school's information indicates that a higher proportion of pupils are on track to have the phonics skills they need by the end of Year 1. Staff have also been trained in the teaching of grammar so that pupils write sentences well before progressing to longer pieces. Work in books shows that this is beginning to have a positive impact.

By using a wide range of information, you and your senior leaders know where teaching is stronger and where it needs to improve. Middle leaders are increasingly sharing the responsibility for improving teaching and learning. Subject leaders use their significant expertise and experience to provide robust challenge and appropriate support for teachers. During my visit to classrooms, the atmosphere was purposeful and pupils were appropriately involved in a range of learning activities. There were different targets for groups of pupils based on their prior attainment including greater challenge for more able pupils. However, it is too early for these actions to have raised standards and increased pupils' progress.

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 works closely with the governors and leaders. They have committed additional support to the school this year, starting with a review of teaching and learning to pinpoint precisely what needs to improve. The local authority representative is also checking that support from other consultants aligns with the support they provide.

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

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector