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Andrea Charlton
Headteacher
Grindon Infant School
Gleneagles Road
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Tyne and Wear
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Dear Mrs Charlton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Grindon Infant School, Sunderland

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 September 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:

- ensure that the assessment of children's levels of development on entry to the early years foundation stage is accurate
- improve the indoor environment in the early years foundation stage to enable the children to move around freely and without obstruction
- make better use of the considerable skills of the school's teaching assistants during whole class teaching sessions.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the

action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. HMI visited lessons, spoke to pupils and reviewed a range of documentation including pupil progress data, notes of governing body monitoring visits, a local authority review and recent checks on teaching. The Single Central Record was checked to show compliance with safeguarding arrangements because of the large turnover of staff.

Context

There have been a number of changes to the school's staffing since the section 5 inspection. A new headteacher took up post in January. The acting headteacher, who was the school's substantive deputy headteacher, has returned to her role and teaching commitment. A newly qualified teacher is covering maternity leave in one of the Year 1 classes and a more experienced teacher is covering maternity leave in a Year 2 class. A teaching assistant, with specialist training in speech and language, has been given a contract for an additional two days each week.

Main findings

The acting headteacher prepared an action plan, during the autumn term, linked to each of the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 inspection. Evidence gathered during this visit demonstrates that the school has made a positive start in addressing many of the identified actions. For example, a system to track the attainment and progress of all of the children has been implemented and is used well by staff in their lesson planning. However, the action plan requires further detail about who will monitor and evaluate the actions undertaken, when and how this will be done, and by whom. In addition, some of the milestones for improvement are not ambitious enough.

A timely review of the school's marking and feedback policy, together with staff training, has resulted in pupils' literacy and numeracy workbooks being marked in depth and pupils responding to, and learning from teachers' feedback. Pupils enjoy making their green pen corrections and, as a result, are making better progress. However, the pupils have not made fast enough progress in their letter formation because their handwriting workbooks are not marked to the same standard as other workbooks and handwriting is not taught often enough.

The school's governors are highly supportive of the work of the school and are now checking the progress that the school is making on a more regular basis through their school improvement subcommittee (SISCo). Governors are now in a much stronger position to challenge the progress that the school is making and the support provided by the local authority.

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

Following a successful bid of £15 000 from the National College of School Leadership, the school is receiving effective school-to-school support from a local leader of education who is the headteacher of Fulwell Infant School Academy. Partnership working has resulted in improved recording in the children's learning journals in both the nursery and reception classes. Joint work in mathematics led to the development of the new and successful marking and feedback systems. Judgements about the work of the school are now more accurate because of regular monitoring activities undertaken by senior and middle leaders which are modelled on those undertaken in the support school.

After adopting a light-touch approach to supporting the school, the local authority is now monitoring more closely. For example, a whole school review took place at the end of the autumn term which outlined a series of actions to be undertaken in order to secure improvement.

Closely targeted support, from an external consultant, in relation to assessment strategies is beginning to have an impact on the quality of writing in school.

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

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott

Her Majesty's Inspector