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Mrs Liz Jeffrey
Head of Federation
Queen Mary Avenue Infant School
Queen Mary Avenue
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Lincolnshire
DN35 7SY

Dear Mrs Jeffrey

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Queen Mary Avenue Infant School, North East Lincolnshire

Following my visit to your school on 28 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.

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:

- identify more precisely how they plan to ensure that all teachers challenge pupils fully, especially those who are disadvantaged and the most able.

Evidence

During the inspection meetings were held with you, the head of school and the assistant headteacher, three representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement action plan was evaluated. I was accompanied on visits to all classrooms, including the nursery, by the head of school and the

assistant headteacher. Together we observed some teaching and learning, spoke to pupils, scrutinised work and sampled teachers' marking of pupils' work.

Context

A newly qualified teacher started teaching at the school in January 2015. A new part-time teacher took up post at the start of this term to allow the assistant headteacher to relinquish her class teaching responsibilities and spend more time leading improvement. The soft federation with a more successful school, Scartho Nursery, has been developed so that the head of federation shares her time between this school and Scartho Nursery. Consequently, the head of school is now responsible for the day-to-day management of Queen Mary Avenue Infant School.

Main findings

The school development plan was amended with actions, timescales and milestones to take account of the recommendations from the last inspection. However, the plan does not identify precisely how leaders plan to improve teaching. In particular, the plan does not specify what training, support or guidance will be provided so that all teachers challenge pupils fully, particularly the most able and disadvantaged pupils. Governors are identified as being involved in checking on the progress and impact of planned developments. However, the dates for this checking are not always clear. The recent external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding has helped leaders to identify which activities are helping disadvantaged pupils and which are less effective. As a result, senior staff understand the importance of improving the consistency of teaching and achievement for pupils. There is some evidence of the early impact of the school's work.

- The quality of marking and feedback to pupils about their work has improved. Teachers are diligently writing comments in pupils' exercise books. Sometimes comments identify where improvements are needed to a current piece of work and sometimes comments remain quite general about what pupils should do to improve a future piece of work. However, there is some variation in the impact of marking on pupils' work and their learning.
- Senior leaders undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work, across the entire school, and this identified strengths and areas for improvement. Issues common to all classes were identified, such as the need to be more consistent and to check on the impact of marking. Additionally, this identified where individual teachers needed extra help. Although leaders have identified some inconsistency in the way that pupils are taught to form letters leaders have not tackled this. Handwriting and specifically the formation of letters remain issues for the whole school.

- Progress and attainment information indicate that attainment is rising and progress improving for all groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils.
- Teachers are being more robustly held to account for the progress of pupils in their class.
- All teachers have identified the most able pupils in their classes and have begun to identify how these pupils will be challenged. However, during this inspection visits to classrooms and scrutiny of work indicate that challenge for the most able remains an issue for further development.
- Governors know the school well and are aware of where most improvement is needed. They are clear about their role and have begun to check on the impact of planned improvements through regular review meetings. They have started to attend pupil progress meetings where the progress made by all pupils is considered. Governors are questioning where progress has been less than expected. They are aware of the need to close the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Governors have begun to look carefully at the impact of extra work and activities designed to help disadvantaged pupils make more progress.

Although there is evidence of some impact of improvement the need for consistency in the quality of teaching remains a priority.

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 officer knows the school well and provided useful support to the school in helping to engineer the soft federation and how this operates on a day-to-day basis. The local authority provides appropriate challenge and support and undertakes regular visits to check on the progress made. For example, the local officer has undertaken checks on teaching and learning and helped to moderate the school's own view of its effectiveness.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for North East Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector