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Miss Heidi Reitze
Acting Head of School
Springhead Infant and Nursery School
Cooper Street
Springhead
Oldham
Greater Manchester
OL4 4QT

Dear Miss Reitze

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Springhead Infant and Nursery School, Oldham

Following my visit to your school on 5 February 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 October 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the senior leadership team, including the acting head of school and the executive headteacher of Propps Hall School, a good school in Oldham local authority (LA). A meeting was also held with two members of the governing body, including the Chair, and a representative of Oldham LA.

A range of documentation was scrutinised, including records of teaching and learning and minutes of meetings of the governing body. As part of this visit, the school's action plan was evaluated.

Context

The role and involvement of the executive headteacher has been enhanced to help build leadership capacity within the school. To strengthen this capacity further, a senior leader from Propps Hall has been seconded to work at Springhead. Some leadership responsibilities of staff who are substantive members at Springhead have been revised. An additional member of staff – a pastoral care worker – took up post in January 2015.

Main findings

Leadership across the school is strengthening and the quality of teaching is beginning to improve. The executive headteacher has challenged and enabled all to focus sharply on what needs to be done. As a result, leaders have an accurate view of where strengths and weaknesses lie. The learning and development of children and pupils lie at the heart of leaders' ambitions and actions.

As a result of a more focused checking of teaching and learning, leaders have identified correctly that some teachers need support to ensure the assessments they make about pupils are accurate. As a result, training and support have been put into place. At this point, though, because the latest round of assessments has not taken place, it is too soon to see if these measures have resulted in greater accuracy. However, because leaders have been checking teaching and learning regularly, the initial signs are promising, particularly in the early years and Year 2.

Leaders have reorganised staffing and, in some classrooms, made changes to the working environment. These changes are benefitting pupils and children on two counts. First, there is now greater continuity for pupils in that each class has one teacher for at least most of the week. Where, in the past, there had been some inconsistency in the way information about pupils was passed on from one teacher to another, this is no longer the case. Second, where classrooms have been reorganised, pupils now have appropriate space to work, for example to write more effectively.

The action plan drawn up by leaders addresses well the recommendations made following the October 2014 inspection. The governing body recognises, though, that its involvement in drawing up this plan has been limited. In their efforts to support and challenge leaders in evaluating the success of the plan, governors have reorganised their own committee structure to focus on specific areas. Minutes of meetings show governors are becoming more adept at asking searching questions. Members have rightly recognised their need to undertake further training to ensure they get the information they need and to enable them to ask questions which get to the heart of the matter. They are also aware that because many leadership roles are temporary, there is an element of uncertainty within the school community. Meetings of the governing body, set for the near future, are to address this issue with a view to securing leadership on a more permanent basis.

External support

The good support and challenge from the LA highlighted in the October 2014 inspection report continues. The LA provides helpful financial assistance. It has also brokered the enhanced school-to-school support with Propps Hall, with the result that leadership capacity at Springhead, even allowing for the temporary nature, is strengthening.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Oldham. I would be grateful if you could ensure the executive headteacher receives a copy.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector