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Mr Garry Ratcliffe
Executive Headteacher
Temple Hill Community Primary and Nursery School
St Edmund's Road
Dartford
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Dear Mr Ratcliffe

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Temple Hill Community Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 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 how progress will be checked and impact evaluated
- clarify 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 the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Your head of school took me on a tour and I visited each class. I met a group of pupils from Year 6. The school's plans for

improvement were evaluated, together with records from leaders' monitoring of teaching. I looked at a range of other documents and some pupils' books.

Main findings

Since the inspection, you and your head of school have rightly concentrated on improving the quality of teaching. You are using a wider range of approaches to check that teaching is good enough, for example, through scrutinizing pupils' work, talking to pupils, carrying out lesson observations and reviewing data on pupils' progress. Middle leaders play a greater role in gathering this information and using it to judge the quality of teaching. The information is used to provide training for teachers, including the opportunity to observe others teach, so they can pick up ideas. The school's information shows that the quality of teaching is improving. During my visit to classrooms, the atmosphere was purposeful and pupils were appropriately involved in a range of learning activities. It was clear that pupils knew what was expected of them and teachers were using similar strategies to direct learning and manage behaviour across the school.

The school's improvement plan is closely linked to the priorities identified by the inspection. The plan outlines appropriate actions and identifies the staff responsible for implementing them. However, it does not explain clearly enough how the actions are expected to raise pupils' achievement. Arrangements for monitoring actions and evaluating their impact are not precise enough. Steps need to be measurable so that it is clear what the school is aiming for, with clear milestones to check progress along the way. Other documents show that you have targets for pupils' attainment and progress but these are not woven into the improvement plan. The plan would be more robust if the staff responsible for leading activities were not the same people monitoring their implementation and evaluating impact. This would make it easier for governors to judge how successful school leaders have been in improving teaching and raising standards.

You have made a good start on developing the leadership skills of your middle leaders. They have benefited from useful training and working closely with experienced senior leaders in this school and in your partner school. They are clearer about their roles and responsibilities and have already identified some weaker aspects, from their monitoring, that they are keen to improve. Middle leaders have written action plans for each of their areas of responsibility which have been adjusted to focus on the areas for improvement from the last inspection. However, there is no overview to make sure that all planned actions are covered during the year. Linking the action plans into the school improvement plan would help keep the plans on track.

There has been concerted action to improve the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make). Your reading manager has more time to keep a careful check on pupils' skills, identify gaps in their learning and respond accordingly. There is daily,

direct teaching of letters and the sounds they make from the beginning of the Reception year. Pupils are 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 will have the phonics skills they need by the end of Year 1. The reading manager and leader with responsibility for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are working together to provide additional support for pupils who are not making sufficient progress. You have appointed a speech and language therapist to work at the school three days a week to provide pupils with specialist support. Your early years leader has made changes to the way the Reception classroom and the outdoor spaces are arranged to improve children's speaking and listening skills.

There is evidence from looking at pupils' books that pupils are responding more often to teachers' advice on how to improve their work. Pupils told me how they were being challenged by 'more difficult green pen questions' which they are expected to answer every day. Teachers are focussing on improving writing skills, especially for the most able pupils, and work in books shows this is beginning to have a positive impact. Regular meetings take place to check pupils' progress. When pupils are identified as not making enough progress, plans are drawn up to address their individual learning needs.

Governors have reviewed the way they work and are making the most of training to develop their skills. Through their visits to the school, they believe there is a greater urgency among staff to address underachievement. However, governors would benefit from a clear and concise overview of the impact of the actions of teachers and leaders. This would help them to evaluate the progress the school is making and hold leaders to account.

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 school makes very effective use of its close links with Oakfield Community Primary School. Leaders and teachers work with colleagues at Oakfield frequently which has helped to spread good practice and strengthen the leadership capacity of your school.

Since the inspection, there has been one visit by a local authority representative to advise on improvements in the early years. A review of pupils' progress by the local authority adviser is overdue. There are indications that the local authority will now work more closely with you and identify other appropriate schools for you to visit to see good and outstanding practice. The local authority has provided training for governors to help them improve their practice in challenging and supporting the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Corporate Director of Education, Learning and Skills for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector