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Mrs P Bullough
Headteacher
Waterside Primary School
Ashford Crescent
Hythe
Southampton
SO45 6ET

Dear Mrs Bullough

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Waterside Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 March 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 December 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:

- amend the school action plan so that it shows how pupil outcomes will be improved at each stage
- make sure governors have sufficient information, and obtain their own evidence, to hold you to account
- further develop teaching strategies for more able pupils, so that they are challenged appropriately in all lessons.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, other leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I visited classes with you and the deputy headteacher and looked at work in pupils' books. I also reviewed school documentation, including the school improvement plan.

Main findings

You have taken purposeful action to tackle the areas for improvement. The action plan demonstrates clearly how you intend to improve the school. It shows how you expect pupil outcomes to be improved over time but it does not break it down into regular enough progress checks. This means that governors cannot be sure whether your actions are helping the school to improve.

Middle leaders are becoming more effective. The relevant support and development they have received from you and external advisers is helping them to be clearer about their responsibilities and to have confidence to carry out their roles. It is positive that they are much more involved in checking planning and pupils' work in books, as well as visiting classrooms to check teaching. They are also now rightly taking responsibility for the achievement of pupils by meeting with the teachers in their teams to review the progress of individuals.

Governors are beginning to be more effective but there is more to do. They have taken urgent and relevant action to improve the way they organise, carry out and feed back about visits to school. However, they are too tentative when asking challenging questions of you. This means that they are not holding you to account effectively.

The quantity and quality of pupils' writing is improving rapidly. It is positive that pupils now have weekly opportunities to write for an extended period. The introduction of a whole-school stimulus for writing is providing useful support for weaker teachers. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are better supported to reflect on and improve their writing.

Teaching in other areas is also improving. In mathematics the new calculation policy is providing a useful framework for teachers to make sure they cover mathematical concepts in a structured way. In phonics, the specialist teacher, working alongside newer or weaker teachers to plan and model lessons, has been effective in helping to improve practice.

Teachers are more aware of meeting the needs of the more able pupils. Leaders are sensibly checking planning to ensure appropriate challenge is offered. However, there is more to do to ensure activities are well-structured to support and develop the thinking of these pupils in all lessons.

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 has confidence in your leadership and you are appreciative of the increased support provided since the section 5 inspection. The recent involvement of advisors has been effective in supporting subject improvements. The local authority has offered to carry out an external review of governance, which would be useful in helping the governing body to be clear about how to challenge and hold leaders to account.

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

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams
Her Majesty's Inspector