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Marianne Allen  
Headteacher  
Springfield Lower School  
Orchard Street  
Kempston  
Bedford  
MK42 7LJ

Dear Mrs Allen

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Springfield Lower School**

Following my visit to your school on 24 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. However, this inspection also identified concerns regarding statutory processes which need to be followed in relation to safeguarding children in the school. Although all staff that come into contact with children have undergone a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and children are kept safe in school, the recording of these recruitment checks on staff on the school's single central register is not compliant with current requirements. The school is likely to be re-inspected in the near future to ensure that this matter has been fully addressed. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that an audit of the school's record of recruitment checks on staff is carried out and the school responds rapidly to all recommendations
- refine the school action plan so that it indicates when progress against action points will be measured and shared with senior leaders and governors

- clarify the role of the teacher responsible for the achievement of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium
- act on the findings of the review of governance.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the teacher responsible for the achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those in the case of the local authority), pupils from Year 4, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and scrutinised the school's record of recruitment checks of staff.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, one teacher has left the school and has been replaced by an agency supply teacher. You have created a team of middle leaders responsible for English and mathematics, achievement, pupil premium and pupil inclusion.

## **Main findings**

The action plan produced by the school prioritises the areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection and sets a challenging timescale for the school to become good. The plan needs to be refined to provide measureable success criteria, with linked actions. This will allow governors to evaluate progress.

At the time of the previous inspection, the leadership structure did not meet the needs of the school because there were no middle leaders to whom senior leaders could delegate tasks. You have rightly addressed this gap by creating a team of middle leaders who took on this role from the start of the spring term. One of these middle leaders is responsible for the achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium. She has been proactive in producing a pupil premium action plan, and you have just received the outcome of the pupil premium review. Once this review has been analysed, the pupil premium leader plans to adapt her action plan. Currently there is a lack of clarity as to what this role entails, which will make it difficult for you to hold her to account.

In 2014, pupils' results in the phonics screening check were poor. You have since improved the teaching of phonics and the local authority has supported training in this subject. Pupils are now grouped more suitably and teachers adopt a range of approaches to secure improved outcomes. Hence, pupils are making more rapid progress in phonics than before.

You have provided your newly-appointed middle leaders with appropriate training to help them evaluate pupils' work, and understand and interpret data on pupils'

attainment and progress. You have scheduled training to develop their lesson observation skills in order to ensure they are effective in making informed judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. This is a sensible approach to improving the quality of teaching.

You have started to tackle weaknesses in the governing body by commissioning a review of governance, which is well underway. The governors, with whom I met, recognised a need to drive improvements in the school by holding the headteacher and senior leaders to account for achievement, teaching, and behaviour and safety. When the review is completed, you are aware that its findings will need to be developed into a plan that strategically addresses the weaknesses outlined in the previous report.

Ofsted is likely to 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 an accurate view of the school's areas for improvement. They have brokered the support of a headteacher mentor from a local successful school who has been instrumental in delivering the phonics training. The local authority has funded the pupil premium review and brokered the governance review as well as a programme aimed at raising achievements of pupils. The school improvement partner and senior local authority officials have met with the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss their expectations of the governing body in driving school improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**