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Mrs Sue Mellor
Headteacher
Meadowhead Infant School
Shorrock Lane
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB2 4TT

Dear Mrs Mellor

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Meadowhead Infant School, Blackburn with Darwen

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 January 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- increase the frequency by which leaders monitor the quality of teaching so that teachers receive regular feedback and individual support
- devise a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme which tightly focuses on the areas for improvement from the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and with the two senior leaders with oversight of reading, writing and mathematics. I also met with three members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. I visited each class

and spoke informally to some pupils about their work. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan and reports from leaders on their monitoring of the quality of teaching. I also scrutinised a sample of books from each class.

Context

There have been no significant contextual changes since the last inspection.

Main findings

You have written a comprehensive school improvement plan that focuses on the areas for improvement from the last inspection. In this, you have included targets for pupils' progress and attainment in each year group. These are appropriate and provide you and other leaders with a helpful goal against which you can check if your actions are effective. However, the system you have in place for checking on improvements has not been carefully thought through. It is not yet regular or focussed enough. Teachers do not receive enough feedback on the quality of their teaching and, consequently, your support for their improvement is not specific or rapid enough.

Senior leaders are involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. Nevertheless, these checks do not look specifically at the areas for improvement from the last inspection – such as whether pupils now have more opportunities to practice different styles of writing or to use their mathematical skills to solve practical problems. As a result, they are unable to show that these areas are steadily starting to improve across the school.

You have introduced a new marking policy and teachers provide pupils with regular feedback from their teacher. All teachers are following this and pupils know that 'green means something I have to improve'. Despite this, in the sample of mathematics books, I looked at, the next step or 'challenge' usually requires pupils to make the same calculation, regardless of their ability. This shows that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not yet high enough.

You continue to check frequently on the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and have put in place additional help for those children who need more support. Your information on pupils' progress shows that this has had a positive impact. Many more pupils in Year 1 are on track to achieve the expected standard than was the case last year.

The leader for the Early Years setting has visited a partner school to look at good practice in outdoor provision. From this, she has worked with staff to improve how effectively teachers plan for outdoor learning. This has ensured that aspects of communication, literacy and mathematics are always included in the learning opportunities pupils have when they are outside.

Governors have only recently agreed to appoint an external partner who will review their effectiveness. At the time of this inspection, the date for this was not yet agreed. Governors have not developed some of the systems they need to have in place for checking on school improvement, and for holding leaders to account. However, they are fully committed to ensuring they allocate the resources and time they need in order to accelerate school improvement.

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 appointed an adviser to the school who meets at least termly with the headteacher. She recognises that the school's leadership needs support in the short-term to increase the pace of improvement in the school. This support has not been provided quickly enough. On the date of this inspection, the local authority confirmed that they have allocated additional funds to the school and have identified a local headteacher to support improvements.

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

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley

Her Majesty's Inspector