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27 March 2015

Ms Fey Wood
Headteacher
Olivers Battery Primary School
Austen Avenue
Olivers Battery
Winchester
SO22 4HP

Dear Ms Wood

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Olivers Battery Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2013. 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:

- ensure that all pupils make accelerated progress, particularly in writing and in Year 5
- insist that all lessons in Key Stage 1 are purposeful and prepare pupils well for Year 3
- increase all leaders' sense of urgency, so that no momentum is lost and the school continues to improve at a fast pace.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders and members of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a representative from the local authority. You took me on a tour of the school and teaching was observed in all classes. I evaluated plans to improve the school and scrutinised a sample of pupils' books and teachers' lesson planning. I also checked information about current pupils' achievement and the predictions for attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection, in December 2013, there have been a number of staffing changes. The headteacher who was in post at the time of the section 5 inspection and the first monitoring inspection visit has left the school. Since then two interim headteachers and two seconded deputy headteachers were appointed to lead the school until your appointment in January 2015. Four teachers have left the school since the first monitoring inspection and three teachers have been appointed. The leader for Key Stage 2 left the school in December 2014. The deputy headteacher took up her post in January 2015.

Main findings

Since your appointment you have significantly raised expectations. You have built on improvements made by the previous interim school leaders and challenged staff to improve even more. You have put together a sharply focused plan, with ambitious short-term targets and timescales, that conveys the right level of urgency. Pupils' rates of progress are accelerating, although you correctly identify that this is not consistently fast enough throughout the school, particularly in writing. However, there are clear signs that improvements are being sustained and that the legacy of weak teaching and low expectations is being overcome.

The school looks brighter and more welcoming. Displays celebrate pupils' work and show their active participation in the process of school improvement. Classrooms are tidier and focus on current learning, with useful displays that pupils use to support their work. Staff morale has been restored. They find you approachable and your drive and determination are visibly influencing staff to carry out their duties with cheerful energy. The deputy headteacher leads by example in her own classroom and in setting high expectations. She helps to ensure that staff benefit from the right professional development and coaching across the school, supporting staff to plan together and share each other's good practice. Parents are happier with the improved communication and stable leadership in the school.

Teaching is improving. Your mantra that 'everything should have a purpose' is compelling for staff and for pupils. In lessons, pupils were interested and productive. Pupils are now provided with more challenging and stimulating texts to read and to inspire their own writing, and they have better opportunities to write in subjects other than English. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils confidently told me about their writing targets without prompting. They showed that they could write with shared enjoyment and sustained concentration, using a growing vocabulary to create a vivid sense of character in the story of *The Sleeping Beauty*. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support individual pupils and smaller groups who need extra assistance. Where there is a weaker sense of purpose to lessons and the aim and context are not made clear to pupils, teaching is less effective.

From evidence in pupils' mathematics books, I noted that pupils are practising calculations more tenaciously and thereby mastering their number skills. Teachers' lesson plans show that they are taking into account the ability of individual pupils when setting number work and problem solving.

Pupils' current progress presents a mixed picture. Teachers' assessments have been carefully moderated and are now accurate. Class teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their classes. They have risen to the challenge of ensuring that each pupil makes good progress from their individual starting points. You know how well pupils are doing in each year group and that pupils' progress is not moving forward consistently or as quickly as you could like, particularly in Year 5. You have made brave decisions with staffing to ensure that pupils have the best chances to catch up. Achievement in the current Year 6 is looking more positive, although there are some middle-ability and more-able pupils who need more pushing to work harder under the new regime in order to achieve their target levels.

Children in the early years now benefit from a tidier and more stimulating outdoor area. For example, there are appealing and well-organised areas for reading and writing arranged around the outdoor equipment, which mirror activities organised indoors. Teachers' planning in the early years is highly responsive to the needs of children, ensuring that, on the one hand, there are better opportunities for children to initiate activities and be creative and, on the other, challenging teacher-led activities to push the more-able children in the current year group. During the inspection, it was delightful to see how children had been given the opportunity to initiate a 'show-jumping' game, which built on their individual interests. Children joined in as 'riders', counted and measured each performance and discussed what they saw using sophisticated and some specialist vocabulary, working purposefully as a team.

The deputy headteacher and other leaders are quickly developing their roles and having a measurable impact on teaching and achievement. Performance management and rigorous target-setting for staff is firmly in place. Teaching has

been evaluated accurately. Strong support for pupils with special educational needs promotes their well-being and confidence. However, further work is needed in order to measure the impact of the extra support on pupils' progress in English and mathematics. School leaders also need to ensure that younger pupils are even better prepared for the demands of Year 3 work at Key Stage 2.

Governors have increased the attention they pay to monitoring the school, including more visits and contact day to day. They have a strong understanding of how the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are improving. They have rightly turned some of their attention to promoting the school and raising its profile in the community. There are clear signs that parents are more supportive and that their faith in the school is being restored.

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 continues to be a high priority for the local authority. The local authority stepped in promptly with the appointment of strong interim leaders. There has been focused and practical guidance for leadership, curriculum planning and teaching in English. Mathematics teaching and provision for pupils with special educational needs have also been well-supported by local authority officers. Further guidance for governors is planned and the school has also benefited from links with other schools. I recommend that further links are made with strong early years provision in good or outstanding schools, in order to build upon the successes seen in this area of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector