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Mrs Emma Bellamy
Headteacher
Lound Infant School
Sherburn Gate
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S35 2EU

Dear Mrs Bellamy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lound Infant School, Sheffield

Following my visit to your academy on 20 April 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- Develop the work with the partner school to strengthen leadership at all levels.
- Improve the expertise and first-hand insight of the governing body in order to support and challenge leaders more effectively.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, three representatives of the Governing Body and the trust, and a representative from the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A tour of classes was made

with senior leaders, some pupils' work was examined and information about pupil progress was considered.

Context

One of the interim co-headteachers was appointed as headteacher of both Lound Infant and Lound Junior Schools and took up post in April 2015. The other co-headteacher is now the deputy headteacher of the Infant School.

Main findings

The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have acted promptly to tackle the key issues identified at the recent inspection. The school improvement plan has been re-focused on the areas of improvement with appropriate targets for 2015. Leaders have helpfully identified the aspects of performance to be improved each term. In addition, leaders have rightly identified that leadership, management and teaching in the early years need further development. The separate early years action plan should be included in the school improvement plan.

Leaders are beginning to link the evaluation of progress data, the work in pupils' books, and the effectiveness of key teaching skills, such as questioning, to develop a more comprehensive and in-depth evaluation of teaching and learning over time. The headteacher correctly highlights the need for more precise and short-term actions and objectives to increase the progress of particular groups of pupils.

Earlier screening of pupils' knowledge of letter and sounds (phonics) has enabled teachers to more quickly identify and support pupils not making enough progress. Current data indicates that more Year 1 pupils are on track to meet the national standard and more Year 2 pupils are likely to succeed in the re-take tests.

Not enough Year 2 pupils have reached the higher levels in reading. In order to improve pupils' skills, teaching assistants and volunteers have had training in questioning and pupils have been provided with reading buddies. In order to improve the progress of the more able in mathematics, setting has been introduced in Year 2. It is too early to show the impact of these actions.

Expectations of pupils' work have been defined more clearly and are non-negotiable for teachers and pupils. This has begun to result in more consistent and higher quality presentation. The same approach has been applied to marking and feedback. Teachers follow more explicit guidance on how to phrase the next step in learning. Leaders report that pupils respond more promptly and frequently to marking. Leaders plan to sharpen the evaluation of marking by judging how effectively it helps weaker pupils accelerate progress. They also plan professional development to refine questioning for deeper understanding and to challenge the more able more effectively.

Subject leaders for literacy and mathematics have adjusted their plans and priorities in the light of the recent inspection. They are focussing appropriately on the key issues and actively monitor the impact of their actions. Senior leaders are keen to develop middle leaders' role in evaluating data and pupils' books.

The governing body has established a more secure academy leadership structure. The appointment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has helped to clarify the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders. The headteacher and the governing body are considering whether the two academies, with one headteacher and one governing body, should become one academy in the future.

A new governors' handbook clarifies and raises the standards of what is expected from academy governors. Governors were disappointed with the outcome of the inspection and some have been slower than senior leaders to accept the judgements. Since the inspection, the headteachers' report has provided a clearer account of action on school priorities and a more analytical breakdown of the progress made by different groups of pupils. This is beginning to help governors to ask more relevant and challenging questions. The new senior leaders would like governors to develop a better first-hand understanding of key issues in school and to interrogate senior leaders more rigorously. Governors have access to relevant information and training through the local authority. They are considering making closer links with another governing body to help them identify best practice.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

As a result of an invitation from the local authority, the headteacher has linked with Oughtibridge primary, an outstanding school, as part of a local authority 'improving schools' project. The Oughtibridge headteacher, a national leader in education, has started to provide helpful leadership support for the development of governors, middle leadership and marking. In addition, she is providing mentoring for the new headteacher. Other links have been made with local schools to develop marking, check assessment and improve the quality of the early years.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Sheffield and as below.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell

Her Majesty's Inspector

- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]