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Susan Chapman
Executive Headteacher
Whitecotes Primary School
Whitecotes Lane
Walton
Chesterfield
S40 3HJ

Dear Mrs Chapman

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Whitecotes Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most-recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in January 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher and headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and a small group of staff with leadership and management responsibilities. I toured the school, visiting all classrooms briefly and holding discussions with pupils. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement and action plans were evaluated.

Context

An interim headteacher has been seconded from another school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

With the support of the interim headteacher, you have increased the rate at which improvements are being made at the school. Other leaders and managers confirmed to me that senior leaders have brought greater clarity about the priorities for the school and a stronger sense of direction. Those things are helping the other leaders and managers to fulfil their roles more effectively. Overall, the improvements in leadership and management have injected increased urgency into developments.

The improvements are the result of a combination of carefully chosen professional development opportunities for the staff and more-rigorous management of the staff's performance, including using the data about the pupils' achievement. The pupils explained how the teachers were beginning to expect more of them. That is the result in part of the work you have carried out to ensure that the teachers know what the school's data show about how well the pupils are doing.

The pupils demonstrated to me how some of the changes you have made to teaching and learning were helping them. They have now a better understanding than previously of how well they are doing and of what more they need to do. Your data and the local authority's checks on the school indicate that the pupils' achievement is improving.

You are working closely with the local authority. The school improvement plan and the local authority's statement of action have been aligned carefully. As a result, the support that has been provided is having a positive effect.

The governing body has also improved the quality of its own work. It is now better informed about how well different groups of pupils are achieving. It has been helped in that regard by the now-completed review of the school's use of the pupil premium (additional funding from the government).

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss

Her Majesty's Inspector