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Mr Stuart McConnachie
Executive Headteacher
Coombe Road Primary School
Coombe Road
Brighton
BN2 4ED

Dear Mr McConnachie

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Coombe Road Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 May 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. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- Strengthen the school improvement plan so that governors and leaders can more easily evaluate the impact of their actions on outcomes for pupils.
- Extend plans to show how school leaders intend to address the following areas for improvement identified by the inspection:
 - improve pupils' attendance
 - raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior team, middle leaders, a governor and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since

the last inspection. You took me on a tour of the school and I visited most classes. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan. I also looked at some pupils' books.

Context

Since the last inspection the deputy headteacher and one teacher have left. Your post of executive headteacher has been extended until the end of August 2016. A head of school joined at the beginning of April for the same period. The executive deputy headteacher from Coldean School is working at the school part-time. The governing body has formed a partnership with the governing body from Coldean School.

Main findings

At the time of the previous inspection you had only been in post for two weeks. Since you joined the school as the executive headteacher you have made an immediate impact. You stabilised the school after the departure of the previous headteacher and raised staff morale. The arrival of the head of school and executive deputy headteacher have brought further positive changes. Staff have welcomed your drive for improvement and many have raised their expectations of pupils.

Much of your work has dealt with making sure that teaching improves. You analysed inconsistencies in teaching and this has provided a base on which to build an effective staff training programme. Regular training is now in place, in addition to specific support for individual teachers. You have implemented new approaches to the teaching of reading and mathematics. Pupils now have opportunities to access a wider range of texts and are enjoying reading more. A Year 1 pupil told me how much he was enjoying choosing his new reading book. During mathematics lessons, pupils are using more practical resources to help improve their understanding. Work in books shows that this is beginning to raise achievement in mathematics. Teachers' marking now explains to pupils how to improve their learning and gives clear targets to help pupils make faster progress.

During my visit to classrooms there was evidence of a greater level of challenge for pupils. In many classrooms the atmosphere was purposeful and pupils were appropriately involved in a range of learning activities. In the Reception Year, children were fully engaged in their number work.

You have strengthened the systems used for tracking pupils' progress. Teachers more regularly assess how well pupils are progressing in reading, writing and mathematics. Together with colleagues from Coldean School, leaders compare pupils' work to check the accuracy of assessments. When pupils are identified as not making enough progress, effective plans are drawn up to address their individual learning needs. Currently, school data indicated that pupils in Year 6 are on course for improved results in 2015.

Although school leaders are closely monitoring the progress of pupils against end of year targets, these measures are not woven into the school improvement plan. The plan outlines appropriate actions but it does not explain clearly enough how these actions are expected to raise pupils' achievement. Arrangements for monitoring actions and evaluating their impact are not precise enough. Steps need to be measureable with clear milestones along the way to help governors judge how successful school leaders have been in improving teaching and raising standards. You drew up the school's plans when you arrived at the beginning of January and they do not include some of the key areas for improvement identified by the last inspection. Poor attendance by some pupils is limiting their progress and this should be a priority for action. Disadvantaged pupils are benefitting from the improvements made across the school, but specific plans to use additional funding to increase their rate of progress are not clear.

You have made a good start on developing the skills of your middle leaders. They have benefitted from useful training and working closely with experienced leaders from Coldean School. They are clearer about their roles and responsibilities. From their monitoring they have already identified some weaker aspects in subjects that they lead that they are keen to improve.

Since the inspection, the governing body has set up a partnership arrangement with governors at Coldean School. This has ensured that the executive leadership of the school is in place until the end of the next academic year. A review of governance is also taking place. Governors have not been involved in monitoring and evaluating the school improvement plan and have been slow to respond to some of the areas for improvement identified by the inspection

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

Staff at Coldean school have provided effective staff training and support. The local authority has continued to support the school by providing funding for teaching resources and leadership training. During two visits to the school, the local authority officer has supported you to identify priorities for improvement and check that actions have been taken to address these. However, the local authority has not challenged the school to evaluate the impact of actions taken on the progress of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector