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Jennifer Wightman
Headteacher
Sundon Park Junior School
Kinross Crescent
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LU3 3JU

Dear Mrs Wightman

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sundon Park Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 14 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you and the assistant headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and a representative of the local authority. I met the two newly qualified teachers currently teaching in Year 4. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including records of monitoring undertaken by the school and reports provided by the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

A new Chair of the Governing Body took up post soon after the inspection in January 2015. The interim deputy headteacher, appointed in March 2015, is leaving at the end of the summer term. From September 2015, the current assistant headteacher will be acting deputy headteacher. Two middle leaders will be acting assistant headteachers to strengthen the leadership team. The subject leader for mathematics is leaving at the end of the summer term. The school is currently advertising for a replacement.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

All discussions with leaders, governors and parents give the clear impression of a school that has moved forward since its section 5 inspection. You are steering everyone's energy towards improving the school quickly and your ambition is to lead the school to good as soon as possible, and well within two years. This ambition is laudable; however, much needs to be done to demonstrate the impact of all strategies on improving leadership, teaching and progress from pupils' different starting points.

The school's action plan shows how rapid improvement will be achieved. Actions are precise and indicate clearly how weaknesses will be eradicated. Most of these actions are rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching. You monitor teaching frequently and teachers are given detailed guidance on what they need to improve, although timelines indicating when improvement is expected are less precise. This is required to accelerate pupils' achievement more quickly.

Examples of improved practice in teaching and learning include:

- a more consistent approach to marking and correcting pupils' misconceptions
- a clear focus on improving pupils' handwriting and presentation of work
- daily work to improve reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling
- improved use of questioning and technical vocabulary in mathematics.

You are aware that some aspects of teaching are still not good enough. There is much to do to ensure that pupils of all abilities make rapid progress; this is particularly the case for the more-able pupils. There is potential to make better use of extended projects, including more challenging homework. It is too early to see whether the new system to record the progress of pupils who receive additional support is making a difference. Support learning assistants are not completing the 'feedback sheets' well enough at present. Tighter communication between class teachers and the support learning assistants is required to meet pupils' individual learning needs.

The parents I met are pleased with the work of the school. You set up a meeting for them soon after the inspection and kept them well informed of developments. Parents say that more staff are visible at the school gate in the morning and they are particularly pleased with the new 'clipboard' staff use to note their feedback; this shows that the school takes their concerns and ideas seriously.

Current leadership is in a period of transition and your interim plans are appropriate to sustain improvement. You are using the expertise of local schools, you avoid overloading staff with too many initiatives and you ensure that teachers receive consistent messages on how to improve the quality of their teaching. The support for the two newly qualified teachers has been particularly successful. You are rightly

planning more training for middle leaders and reviewing the amount of time they have to monitor the quality of provision in their areas of responsibilities because subject leadership, other than in English and mathematics, requires improvement.

The local authority is providing extensive support. The improvement adviser is monitoring key aspects of the school's work almost weekly. The teaching and learning consultants for English and mathematics are coaching staff effectively. The local authority statement of action includes all aspects that it should to meet requirements. It outlines appropriate support and is aligned to the school's action plan. The statement of action indicates how progress against the school's action plan will be monitored and evaluated. The School Improvement Group (SIG), chaired by the local authority, is central to the evaluation of the school's progress. The first SIG meeting took place in April 2015. The draft minutes of this meeting poorly record the action points agreed to improve the school. The Chair of the Governing Body only received brief notes of the SIG meeting on the morning of this monitoring visit. The delay and lack of detail are restricting the ability of leaders and governors to check that they are working in the right direction. The local authority adviser is acting swiftly to rectify this.

Governors are very supportive of the school. The new Chair of the Governing Body is clear about what needs to be done and the school's action plan shows how governors will monitor progress on their key priorities. Governors must act urgently, however, to ensure that the external review of governance and the use of pupil premium, recommended at the January inspection, are undertaken without further delay.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. However, this may only be done following consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé

Her Majesty's Inspector

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- Director of Children's Services for Luton