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19 May 2015

Mrs L Dean / Mrs J Lavery  
Headteacher  
Cambridge Primary School  
Cambridge Street  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria  
LA13 9RP

Dear Mrs Dean / Mrs Lavery

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cambridge Primary School, Cumbria**

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 March 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 school should take further action to:

- develop the approach to lesson observation to focus more sharply on pupils' learning and progress,
- draw together information from observing teaching and checks on pupils' work to evaluate the impact of teaching over time,
- specify who will be responsible for evaluating the impact of actions and add measures of pupils' achievement to the improvement plans
- ensure activities in the early years develop over the year so they stimulate learning and maintain the interest of children.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you as the co-headteachers of the school, the literacy and mathematics subject leaders, a group of pupils, representatives of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and the impact of monitoring and evaluation. I visited lessons and sampled pupils' work.

## **Main findings**

The school improvement plans address the areas requiring improvement. Actions are relevant, set within a realistic time frame and identify the people responsible for leading initiatives clearly. However, monitoring progress with the plan is almost entirely the responsibility of you as headteachers and it is not clear who will evaluate the impact of actions. It would be helpful to add details about who will evaluate the impact of actions and add milestone measures of pupils' achievement. Staff are motivated and committed to securing improvements. They are working hard to make changes.

The areas for improvement in teaching focused on: ensuring work is well matched to pupils' ability; improving the impact of marking; and developing pupils' mathematical skills. Teachers are paying more attention to the different ability groups in their classes when planning lessons and they have increased their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teaching in the school is most successful where learning objectives are clear and teachers use assessment to plan activities that build on pupils' prior knowledge and skills. However, there are still occasions when tasks are too difficult or too easy for some pupils and the activities do not support the intended learning outcome well.

All teachers are following the marking policy and this is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils say they find teachers' comments helpful and enjoy the 'response time' and 'challenge questions'. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and say that mathematics lessons, especially, are 'great fun'. The focus on mental strategies and application of number facts is motivating and pupils are enjoying the challenge. The promotion of mathematics across the curriculum is clearly evident in teachers' planning. There is a need, however, to make sure the links are not too contrived so they distract from understanding the mathematical concepts, or from the development of knowledge and skills in other subjects.

You have planned appropriate action to ensure activities in the early years are more challenging, although implementation of those actions is still at an early stage. The learning environment has more stimulating displays that reflect children's learning. However, the activities provided for children are not yet challenging enough to build on what children can do already and ensure they are suitably prepared for their move into Year 1. Teaching assistants and teachers have taken part in professional

development to improve their understanding of progression in phonics (the sounds that letters represent), which has improved their teaching in this area.

The areas for improvement relating to leadership, identified at the last inspection, focused on middle leadership and improving evaluation of teaching by senior leaders. Middle leaders are developing their skills well with support from the local authority and through links with other schools. Joint observations of teaching and work scrutiny with senior leaders are helping middle leaders to gain oversight of the quality of teaching across the school. Up to now these monitoring activities have focused largely on compliance with school policies. There is now a need to focus more sharply on the impact teaching has on pupils' learning and progress over time.

There has been an external review of governance resulting in a report that provides useful advice and recommendations to strengthen governance. Governors are committed to becoming more challenging and effective and are taking appropriate steps to develop their skills and understanding of data.

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**

The school is drawing effectively on external support. The local authority is providing professional development to support improvement in the early years and teaching across the school. A strategic improvement meeting group has been established. Links with local schools are productive and are enabling teachers to observe and discuss outstanding practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law

**Her Majesty's Inspector**