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Mr David Bridge
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bridge

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stanway Fiveways Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 November 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 May 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 last section 5 inspection, in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all action plans clearly identify how pupil progress will improve so that leaders and governors can regularly check on pupil achievement.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, pupils, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions being taken to improve the school. I scrutinised a range of documents and visited every classroom. I also looked at pupils' books and spoke with them about their work.

Context

Since the last inspection, one teacher has been recruited and will join the school in February 2016 to cover maternity leave. You have also settled into your new role as substantive headteacher.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors have acted swiftly in response to the findings from the last inspection. You have written a raising attainment plan for this academic year to address all of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. Each action in the plan has success criteria. However, these are not as clear as they could be to enable leaders and governors to check if the action taken has directly contributed to improvements in pupils' progress.

Leaders have refined the school's assessment system so that it is used more rigorously and regularly to check on pupils' progress and attainment. This means that they can rapidly identify individuals who are at risk of falling behind. There is now clear evidence of these pupils making accelerated progress following the individualised support they received.

Phase and subject leaders are more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of individual pupils and groups of pupils. Leaders, therefore, have a much clearer view of the area for which they are responsible. Action plans have been written which has meant that the momentum to drive forward whole-school improvement has been maintained. Although these plans are detailed, there is less of a focus on the expected pupil outcomes. The plans could be sharpened further so that it is clear how well pupils are achieving.

You have ensured that performance management targets for teachers have been closely linked to increasing the proportion of pupils who make more than expected progress. You have rightly identified that the progress of the most-able pupils remains a priority in Key Stage 2. Leaders have begun to ensure pupils are better challenged, and evidence of this is clear in their English books. There is a higher precision in pupils' use of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils throughout Key Stage 2 told me that they can clearly see how much progress they have made since the 'cold' and 'hot' tasks system has been in place. They told me it has really benefited them and were eager to explain how teachers' comments have helped them.

Similarly, in mathematics, pupils are enthusiastic about the problem-solving and investigation work that has begun in earnest this term. Pupils as young as Years 1 and 2 were hotly debating how they would tackle a problem, unafraid to try and, possibly, not succeed. The perseverance and resilience was clearly evident, supported well by your work on pupils developing a positive approach to problems, creating a culture where they will 'have a go'.

You have worked with governors to ensure that the assessment information they receive is appropriate. Reports now highlight pupil progress and attainment for each year group. Governors told me that this has given them the confidence to challenge and ask questions. Although this work is still developing, there is clear evidence in governing body meeting minutes that governors understand what the information is telling them, so that they can hold you more to account for raising standards across the school.

Parents are better informed about pupils' progress and are overwhelmingly positive in their responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. You have received very positive feedback about the usefulness of the pupil interim report cards and the leaflets about the new assessment system that were shared with parents.

External Support

The good support provided by the local authority before the inspection has continued. Initially, they put in place an improvement board. However, the local authority has noted the school's progress since the previous inspection and the board has since been removed. You attended a recent Ofsted 'Getting to Good' seminar, which you found very useful. The local authority commissioner has identified a good school where governance is a strength, so your governing body can benefit from their expertise.

You have also been proactive in identifying other schools to work with. Leaders have found this to be very beneficial, for example when putting together a comprehensive exemplar of pupils' assessed written work. This has helped teachers to check the accuracy of their judgements of the standard of pupils' writing.

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

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Essex local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector