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Mr Nicholas Benbow
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Dear Mr Benbow

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Otterhampton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 December 2016, 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 December 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in December 2015 the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are not 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 the systems for keeping records of safeguarding and safer recruitment are complete and monitored and evaluated routinely by leaders and governors
- make certain that teachers set work that matches the standards expected for pupils' ages
- put in place robust systems to check regularly on pupils' attainment and progress

which will provide timely advice to teachers so that gaps in pupils' learning are closed quickly, particularly in writing

- ensure that governors receive routine and accurate information on pupils' attainment and progress
- undertake an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke with you, the two English leaders, the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I also held a telephone conversation with the local leader of education who has been supporting your school since November 2015. I talked with pupils in lessons and around the school. Together we scrutinised some examples of pupils' work and reviewed some monitoring documents such as the checks you have conducted on teaching and learning. I reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Context

There has been a considerable turnover of staff since the previous inspection. Two of the three classes have new teachers. Last year, you had no teaching commitment. This year you are currently teaching for three days a week. You have reorganised the class structure in the school. The governing body has also been restructured. There are currently two vacancies on the governing body.

Main findings

You and your governors have failed to check that safeguarding and recruitment procedures are rigorously carried out. Consequently, aspects of the school's record-keeping and governors' checks on records are not fit for purpose. Safeguarding is ineffective. During the monitoring visit, I discovered that procedures to recruit staff were not fully compliant with statutory requirements. You and the chair of the governing body understood the seriousness of such findings and took immediate action to rectify the situation during the inspection.

You closely aligned the school improvement plan with the areas for development in the last full inspection report. Your plan includes well-placed milestones for governors to check the effectiveness of activities. Your immediate action after the inspection brought about some improvements. For example, staff training and the purchase of additional resources have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics. However, weaknesses in teaching still exist because you have needed to revisit key training with new staff this academic year. This has slowed down the school's improvement journey.

Gaps in pupils' learning are not closing quickly enough, particularly in writing. Teachers' expectations for pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills are not high enough. Although the school's policy identifies certain words that pupils must spell correctly, our look at books showed that teachers are not adhering to this policy.

You have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Consequently, attitudes to learning are improving. Pupils' books reflect pupils' improved attitudes towards their learning. They take care to organise their work carefully and to present it neatly. Your literacy leader is rightly proud of the improvements in pupils' handwriting. Pupils understand your expectations and say that rules help to keep the school a 'happy place to be'. However, there is still more work to be done. When teachers do not closely match activities to pupils' needs, pupils are not excited or sufficiently engaged in their learning. As a result, their concentration falters and they do not make enough progress in these lessons.

External support

You have been working closely with a local leader of education (LLE) from Avishayes Community Primary School. The local authority brokered this support in November 2015. The LLE has provided timely advice and guidance. For example, teachers' plans are better matched to support the development of pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics. In the summer term, LLE support focused on the recruitment of two new teachers. You have twice postponed the local authority visits to check the impact of leadership because of staff illness. This has limited the information that governors receive about the progress the school is making. A greater intensity of support is now required to secure higher academic standards across the school and to check that all safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector