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Amy Houldsworth
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Dear Miss Houldsworth

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Spring Bank Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 6 December 2022, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, staff, governors and the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, observed pupils reading, looked at pupils' mathematics books, met a group of pupils and spoke to several parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). I evaluated evidence linked to safeguarding procedures and a range of documents, including minutes of governing body meetings. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Spring Bank Primary School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

The school should take further action to:

- rapidly improve the knowledge and competencies of recently appointed governors so that they fulfil their core strategic functions effectively

- urgently ensure that all governors' statutory responsibilities are discharged, including leaders' legal responsibilities under the SEND code of practice and the public sector equality duty
- improve the quality of the school improvement plan so that it is fit for purpose.

Main findings

There have been significant changes at all levels of senior leadership since the previous inspection in October 2021. Only four members of the governing body were in post at the time of the last inspection. The other recently appointed governors are inexperienced. The chair of governors resigned in November 2022.

There is instability in staffing. The headteacher resigned in April 2022 and left the school in July 2022. Governors have not yet advertised this vacancy. Governors appointed you (deputy headteacher) as acting headteacher in July 2022. You are also acting special educational needs coordinator. Several staff have left the school since the last inspection. Governors have been unable to fill some of these vacant posts.

The teaching of early reading and phonics continues to be effective. This is reflected in the strong results pupils in Years 2 and 6 achieve in statutory tests. You were disappointed in pupils' achievement in the 2022 phonics screening checks in Years 1 and 2. However, key stage 1 pupils' progress in reading and writing slowed down during the period when the school was only open to some pupils during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pupils are catching up with their reading quickly now in key stage 2.

Leaders have been far too slow to improve the quality of education in the remaining curriculum subjects. Some curriculum plans, for example in design and technology, are still being written. In physical education and music, leaders have recently purchased new materials for teachers to use. Some subject leaders are still being trained in their subject. Assessment in several curriculum subjects is not fully in place. Leaders are not planning to monitor the quality of education in several curriculum subjects until the spring term 2023. Inspectors first identified the slow pace of curriculum improvement in December 2017, and again in 2021. Despite this, leaders have continued at a slow pace to improve the curriculum offer.

The clear weaknesses in leadership and management account for this failure. You lead on many leadership areas because of staff absences or vacancies.

Some pupils with SEND have unmet needs. This is because staff do not provide the necessary support to enable all pupils with SEND to access the curriculum.

Inexperienced governors do not hold leaders to account effectively. The quality of the school improvement plan is poor. Deadlines lack the necessary urgency. The plan is not fully costed. It is rarely reviewed. Minutes of governing body meetings show insufficient evidence of challenge and sometimes complacency. Governors spend too much time

discussing operational matters. They lack a clear strategic vision for the school and they do not take decisive strategic actions with the required urgency. Governors are aware of the many aspects of leadership and management at all levels that need to improve rapidly, but leaders, including governors, are not making these improvements rapidly.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracey Ralph
His Majesty's Inspector