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Thomas Garner
Headteacher
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Barnett Lane
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Dear Mr Garner

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Fairhaven Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 4 May 2023, 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, other senior leaders, a representative of the local governing body and a representative of the local authority, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. I also met with teachers, visited a sample of phonics and geography lessons, spoke to pupils and scrutinised school improvement plans and governor meeting minutes. I also looked at a sample of pupils' work and listened to pupils read to a familiar adult. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Fairhaven Primary School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- Ensure that plans for improvement are tightly focused on the actions that are most needed in order to ensure improvement, and that they include precisely defined intended outcomes and sufficiently urgent deadlines for implementation.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes to staffing and governance. Areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection are being addressed, but some of the improvements have been implemented slowly and are not as sharply focused on the right things as they could be.

You have rightly prioritised pupils' reading by adopting a new phonics scheme and, more recently, purchasing additional reading materials. Staff have received appropriate training to deliver the new phonics scheme. However, there remain some inconsistencies in how phonics is taught. You have identified that some extra support is needed to ensure that all teachers deliver phonics consistently well. Nonetheless, pupils enjoy learning to read. Sensibly, you have purchased new reading books to enable all pupils to practise reading using books matched to the sounds they know and are learning.

Since the last inspection, you have focused on rewriting your curriculum to ensure that it is coherent and sequenced. Leaders are now identifying the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn and the order in which they should learn it. The implementation of this work is in its infancy and has not yet had the impact you intend. For example, in some lessons, pupils are learning new content when they do not have the basics in place. You are also introducing strategies to help pupils remember more, over time. Again, this work is quite new and not yet embedded.

There have been changes to the governing body since the previous inspection. New members are focusing on their training to ensure that they have the right skills to hold you to account. Governors are now undertaking visits to school to triangulate what leaders tell them. Importantly, they are also beginning to challenge leaders appropriately by asking questions about the information they are given.

You, your leadership team and staff are committed to bringing about improvements. You have identified priorities for improvement, broadly based on the areas identified at the previous inspection. You have produced a series of development plans, with the support of an external consultant. However, some of these plans, despite being lengthy, lack the precision and the detail needed to define the desired outcomes. As a result, insufficient focus is given to some of the important areas in need of improvement.

You have been proactive in engaging a range of external support. Subject leaders appreciate the time and support they have received to begin developing their subject areas. Staff feel that leaders are considerate of their well-being.

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 Dudley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Henrick
His Majesty's Inspector