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Mrs Julie Finlay
Headteacher
Mesne Lea Primary School
Walkden Road
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Manchester
Lancashire
M28 7FG

Dear Mrs Finlay

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Mesne Lea Primary School, Salford

Following my visit to your school on 1 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated and minutes of the governing body scrutinised.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection one teacher has left and a number of new appointments have been made to replace staff who will leave at the end of the summer term.

Main findings

A fast pace for change has been set and improving teaching is the top priority. Senior leaders, governors and the local authority have produced a 'collaborative action plan'. The plan is thorough and contains specific and measurable outcomes. It includes a clear rationale so that all staff understand why change is needed. However, a few aspects of the plan are not quite as sharp and specific as they could be.

A non-negotiable set of standards for teachers' planning has been drawn up by you and your staff. Planning is scrutinised every week in much more detail than before. Teachers now receive diagnostic written feedback on the strength of their planning and how it can be improved. A positive feature of all this is that senior leaders are shaping staff training sessions around the weaknesses identified during the course of their scrutiny of teachers' planning. Teachers are sharing good practice to make teaching more engaging.

You expect achievement at Key Stage 2 to rise this year, for pupils to make much better progress in reading, writing and mathematics and for pupils to reach standards above the national average in their phonics screening check. You have identified a Year 5 cohort of children who would benefit from some extra tuition in basic skills; this will begin after the SATS tests.

Governors are working more closely with the year groups with which they are linked. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the governing body met with the National Leader of Education to analyse the inspection outcomes and draft the basis for the collaborative action plan. Every half term, governors scrutinise the 'brick wall', a document produced by you showing every single pupil, the progress they are making and whether their progress is in line with expectations, above or below.

Governors confidently challenge you and your team around those children whose progress is not good enough. Governors have completed a skills audit of themselves to ensure that their own expertise can be used to best effect in order to rapidly raise standards.

Senior leaders, governors and the local authority are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- Further refine the Collaborative Action Plan. Give specific detail of what success will look like for each target and ensure that all staff can make a positive contribution.
- Use the valuable skills and expertise of governors to best effect by involving them more directly in the monitoring of standards
- Build a robust evidence base of teaching over time

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You successfully bid for 'by schools for schools' match funding which has allowed you to work with a National Leader of Education (NLE) to help develop leadership and management and a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) to develop teaching in Key Stage 1. You are also working as part of a 'family' of local schools who collaborate and share good practice together. The local authority has increased its support for your school and at the time of this monitoring visit was, itself conducting a monitoring visit to judge the current quality of teaching and progress. All of this support is having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon

Her Majesty's Inspector