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Mrs J Laver
Headteacher
Priory School
Orchard Avenue
Slough
SL1 6HE

Dear Mrs Laver

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Priory School

Following my visit to your school on 15 July 2013, 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, senior and middle leaders and the Governing Body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated.

Context

Two new deputies have been appointed and there are to be several staff changes before the start of the new September term. There will be a high proportion of teachers new to the profession in September. The school's roll is likely to increase in coming years.

Main findings

The headteacher and newly appointed deputy headteachers have quickly formed an effective team. The last inspection acted as catalyst for change. There are more rigorous procedures for checking the quality of teaching and monitoring the progress made by pupils. The school's own monitoring shows that more teaching is good. There has been a clear focus on improving teaching and this has already led to greater consistency across all classes. There has been an effective focus on improving writing and reading and this is already beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress.

Middle leaders have a clear understanding about what is expected from them and the newly developed management structure is appropriate and should support good communication between leaders at all levels.

Action plans clearly identify what needs to be done but there is not enough clarity about which actions could be achieved quickly and those which might take longer to achieve. Records from senior leaders' lesson observations are not always specific enough and do not consistently make strong enough links between teaching and pupils' progress.

Governors are improving their skills and have provided good support to the school to resolve staffing matters. They are successfully developing procedures to gather more information so that they know how well the school is doing. They are beginning to gain more first-hand information about what goes in school, day-to-day, and how new initiatives are developing, but these procedures are not yet fully in place.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- Make clearer which actions can be achieved quickly and those which may take longer to be completed.
- Provide greater clarity about the role of senior leaders in checking that actions for improvement are completed on time.
- Improve the clarity of notes from senior leaders' lesson observations to ensure that the link between teaching and learning is very clear and explicitly identify why teaching is not the grade above, if it is not already outstanding.
- Ensure that there is well-managed support for all teachers who are at the early stages of their careers.

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

External support

The local authority has provided good support to help the school improve teaching and its provision for special educational needs. The school has sought other additional good quality support and advice in order to develop its provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Towl

Her Majesty's Inspector