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Mrs A Stopforth
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Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Barley Hill Primary

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- Continue to support teachers to ensure that they all have a very good understanding of how to improve their teaching so that it is consistently good or outstanding.
- Establish more precisely how the links with the partner support school are to be used to improve performance and how the impact of this work will be measured.
- Further develop the skills of team leaders so that they can contribute more rapidly to improving the quality of teaching and learning in those areas for which they are responsible.
- Develop clearer short-term targets and timescales within the main areas of the overall improvement plan to give even more urgency and impetus to achieving a good or outstanding grade.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, senior and middle leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was reviewed together with other key documents including the most recent assessment of pupils' progress and information derived from monitoring activities of school leaders and the local authority. Her majesty's Inspector accompanied senior leaders to briefly observe teaching in most parts of the school.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been significant changes in teaching staff. Nearly a third of staff have changed since the last inspection and new teams have been established at the start this new school year.

Main findings

School leaders, including governors, responded appropriately to the outcomes of the last inspection. Both senior leaders and staff are aware of the importance of acting urgently to secure improvements.

Shortcomings in the range and content of subjects taught have already been remedied. Pupils now have more opportunities to write at length and to solve mathematical problems. This is improving pupils' attitudes to learning and their progress because they have more interest in what they do. However the school's detailed analysis of data shows that pupils' progress is still too variable across year groups.

Governors responded quickly to the inspection by considering how they could be more efficient and effective in the way they conducted their business, especially monitoring the work of the school. Appropriate changes are now being introduced.

The role of team leaders is now very clear. They know what they have to do and are very aware of their responsibilities in ensuring that their areas of the school do well and pupils make good progress. They know they need to increase the rigour of their work but require additional training to further develop their skills, for example in observing lessons.

Senior leaders have written an improvement plan that identifies the right areas to focus on but it lacks sharp shorter-term targets. The plan is not always explicit about who, including governors, is responsible for shorter term monitoring.

External support

School leaders and governors have worked closely with the local authority and established good links with a partner outstanding school, which has now been formally commissioned to provide support. This support is at an early stage of development. Other consultants have been employed by the school to monitor teaching. The local authority has recently attached a knowledgeable and previously successful headteacher as a consultant to work with the school to provide additional challenge

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Towl
Her Majesty's Inspector