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Pauline James
Longwood Primary School
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Dear Mrs James

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Longwood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- develop a robust action plan, focusing sharply on the areas for improvement in the last Ofsted inspection.
- further develop tracking procedures to effectively measure pupils' progress.
- improve monitoring procedures to enable senior leaders to fully hold staff to account.
- ensure governors meet regularly to check on the progress the school is making
- attend the Ofsted 'getting to good' seminar

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the senior teacher, the governing body and a telephone call was made to the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated, a number of short visits were made to lessons and school documentation was examined.

Context

Since the last inspection, one class teacher has resigned. The class is currently taught by temporary teachers until the permanent teacher begins her appointment at the spring half term. The governing body has restructured its committee arrangements. Three new teaching assistants have been appointed.

Main findings

Leaders have developed plans of how they intend to improve the school. However, these plans lack clarity and are not focused sharply enough on actions to address the areas for improvement at the last inspection. As a result, staff are not being held to account for their actions. The plan does not include clear timescales of when actions will happen and monitoring procedures are vague. Consequently, governors are unclear about how much progress the school has made on its journey to good. The local authority has not provided enough support to help leaders formulate a robust plan which will drive school improvement.

Leaders acknowledge that tracking procedures require further refinement to show small steps of progress. There is limited analysis of data and the ways in which achievement is recorded is inconsistent.

Greater priority has been given to improving the quality of teaching and training has been delivered to improve teaching strategies. You have monitored that these strategies have been adopted in lessons. However, much of the teaching still requires improvement, with some that is inadequate.

Links with a local cluster of schools is providing useful support. Subject leaders in school are working alongside established and experienced leaders in the cluster to develop their leadership skills. Joint training has been planned with a focus of improving the quality of teaching.

A range of monitoring activities is taking place to check on the quality of teaching. Activities include, assessing the quality of teaching, looking at pupils' books, visiting lessons and seeking the views of pupils. However, the regularity of these activities is unclear and there remains too little focus on checking the progress pupils are making.

Leaders recognise that some pupils are not making enough progress. As a result, more intervention programmes have been introduced to help pupils catch up with their learning. The governing body has employed a further three teaching assistants to deliver this work. As these initiatives have only just begun, it is too early to judge what difference they are making to pupils' outcomes.

There has been a greater focus on challenging the more able pupils. Identified pupils are supported in school to ensure they achieve high levels of attainment especially in mathematics. The school is also improving the quality of provision for the more able through the clustering arrangements with local schools.

Governors are committed to support and challenge leaders in school. They have altered the way they work with new committee structures. Governors have received training and have completed a skills audit of their strengths. However, meetings are not regular enough to ensure the school remains on track to secure a good judgement at the next inspection. As the school development plan is not robust enough, the governors are currently unable to fully hold leaders to account for school improvement.

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 held two meetings with senior leaders since the school was judged to require improvement. Review meetings are planned to analyse the progress made by the school. However, the school has not received enough training or specific support to help them improve. For example, although a template for school improvement planning has been shared, no advice has been given to help leaders complete a robust plan to help the school to improve.

The local authority has commissioned support to help improve the Early Years Foundation Stage and to improve the quality of teaching of reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector