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Dr Susan Dowling
Headteacher
Clarkson Infants School
Trafford Road
Wisbech
PE13 2ES

Dear Dr Dowling

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Clarkson Infants School

Following my visit to your school on 25 February 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 time you spent with me on the phone prior to my visit. I am grateful to the school's deputy headteacher for the help he gave me and for the time he 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 October 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:

- review the allocation of responsibilities across the leadership team to ensure smooth communication when you are off site and sustained impact of your actions on the quality of teaching and learning
- clarify how the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) will play a full role in improving the quality of teaching and learning
- identify more clearly specific actions, targets and success criteria to improve attendance
- act on the findings of the governance review as a matter of urgency.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with the school's deputy headteacher. I met five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to a local authority representative. I evaluated your strategic and operational plans. I reviewed recent achievement and attendance data, and read the outcomes of the governance review that took place in December 2013. I carried out brief visits to lessons with the deputy headteacher and spoke to teachers and pupils about their work.

Context

One teacher left after the inspection and one is leaving at Easter. You have agreed to stay as interim headteacher until the successful recruitment of a permanent leader for the school. New governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

With the support of staff you are beginning to drive improvement through regular reviews of teaching and learning, better engagement with parents and stronger focus on progress made in each year group. Teachers are improving the learning environment so that pupils can access the necessary resources to improve their skills, for example through clear display of key vocabulary and better reading materials. The emphasis on developing literacy skills from an early age is promoted and parents are rightly encouraged to contribute. Pupil progress meetings provide opportunities to challenge teachers' expectation and ensure that work matches pupils' abilities. However, the monitoring of teaching of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) requires consolidation. The current SENCo, who is also the child protection designated person, has limited time to share her expertise and to ensure that pupils receiving intensive support make rapid progress.

Your plans are focused on accelerating pupils' progress and improving the quality of teaching. However, actions, targets and time-lines to improve attendance are not articulated clearly enough. In addition, the proportions for outstanding teaching and for pupils exceeding expected progress should be specified. With the support of the local authority adviser, you are tracking the school's progress closely. The deputy headteacher is fairly new to the school. A review of leadership responsibilities is required to ensure that all leaders are clear about their respective roles.

Governors are starting to take action following the external review of governance that took place shortly after the inspection. However, they are yet to draft a clear action plan to identify what they want to do and by when. They are highly committed and are seeking evidence of the work of the school, for example through visits to look at reading, writing and the application of the marking policy. However, much remains to be done to demonstrate the impact of governance on the school's effectiveness.

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

You are drawing upon the external support provided by the local authority. The primary adviser and subject advisers visit regularly to offer additional support and challenge. Visits to other schools enable teachers to share good practice and there are developing links with the local junior school. The difference these opportunities are making is unproven.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector