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Mr Martyn Bidgood
Headteacher
Long Knowle Primary School
Blackwood Avenue
Wednesfield
Wolverhampton
WV11 1EB

Dear Mr Bidgood

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Long Knowle Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 April 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 January 2014. 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:

- make sure that the school improvement plan includes measurable targets and clear timescales
- tackle the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and ensure that activities help pupils of all abilities to make better progress
- urgently tackle inconsistencies in teachers' marking
- organise training and support to develop governors' understanding of information on pupils' achievement.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and one other senior leader, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed including the latest information about pupils' progress, feedback to teachers following observations of teaching and reviews of pupils' work. HMI also looked at examples of teachers' professional development plans.

Context

You notified governors in September that you will be retiring at the end of August 2014. As a consequence, the governing body has recently appointed a substantive headteacher to join the school from 1st September 2014. Since the last inspection, one teacher has returned to school following a long-term absence.

Main findings

You have amended the school improvement plan to include the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. However, the plan does not contain measurable targets and clear timescales. As a result, there is a lack of clarity about how the intended actions will improve outcomes for pupils or an appropriate timescale for the improvements.

You have taken steps to improve the quality of teaching. All teachers have individual professional development programmes. You have organised coaching partnerships and visits to other schools to enable teachers to learn from good and outstanding practice. However, your evidence from observing teaching and scrutiny of pupils' books show that teaching is not improving rapidly enough. There has been little improvement in ensuring that pupils of all abilities are being provided with suitably challenging work and making better progress.

Senior leaders have introduced new guidance to support teachers' marking. This includes the use of 'pink' and 'green' pens and literacy targets. However, the poor standard of work in pupils' books, over a period of time, shows that teachers are not all using these strategies effectively to help pupils to improve their work and make better progress. In many classes, the work pupils complete is poorly presented. Errors in pupils' letter formation, spelling and punctuation are left uncorrected by teachers over a long period of time.

Governors do not fully understand the information about pupils' achievement or how pupils' progress and attainment compare to those of pupils' nationally. They are not checking carefully enough that your actions and those of other senior leaders are helping pupils of different abilities make better progress in all classes and subjects. As a result, governors are not well-informed about what the school needs to do to be 'good' and are not holding school leaders to account for their work.

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 increased the level of support it offers to the school. Through termly School Improvement Monitoring Group meetings and regular contact with the local authority adviser you are receiving an appropriate level of support and challenge. I recommend that the local authority takes action to support governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector