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27 June 2014

Mrs Lythgoe
Headteacher
Luton Infant & Nursery School
Alexandra Road
Chatham
ME4 5AP

Dear Mrs Lythgoe

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Luton Infant & Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 27 June 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 February 2014. 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:

- set whole school targets for achievement by the end of Key Stage 1, taking into account how much progress different groups of pupils need to make to catch up with their peers
- establish what would constitute good progress for each pupil from their individual starting point
- set expectations for the attainment of each pupil, in each subject, at key points in Years 1 and 2 so you can check progress more clearly over time
- ensure that your school improvement plan makes clear each change in practice required, so that you can evaluate the effectiveness of all the actions taken.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I scrutinised a range of documents including the school's action plans and information about pupils' progress. We observed morning break-time and briefly visited lessons around the school to see teaching and learning.

Context

A senior leader will shortly be taking up the position of an assistant headteacher.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders have responded swiftly and effectively to the recommendations made in the previous inspection report. Your decisive actions are already leading to significant improvements. Your plan details the actions to be taken and the resulting changes in practice or environment required are mostly, but not always, well-defined. The plan includes an overall target for raising achievement. However, the specific improvements in achievement required by different pupil groups, in different subjects and at different points in time are not identified.

You are improving your approaches to checking and evaluating pupils' progress. Middle leaders now carry out learning walks and meet regularly with the teachers they manage to review pupil progress. The new, more accessible electronic system for recording pupil achievement means you are now well placed to analyse and evaluate the progress of different groups of pupils, such as the most able, more effectively. As a result seniors and middle leaders are becoming increasingly able to identify and address areas that need attention. They are now better placed to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils and ensure the rate of learning is rapid.

The behaviour of pupils' as they move around the school site and during break times has improved. New play equipment, different break times for different year groups, more organised play at break time and the introduction of clearer expectations of how pupils should move around the school, have all contributed to this. You are working on a number of well-considered initiatives to improve attendance and punctuality. Your family worker is increasingly joined on home visits by an interpreter, to ensure a good level of communication with parents whose understanding of English is limited. You have increased the number of letters being sent to parents whose children do not attend regularly and the level of sanction for not responding. You and you senior leaders now conduct late duty, providing you the opportunity to talk directly to parents who are not bringing their children to school on time. Attendance was already improving before these new approaches were introduced. Careful checking is now needed to see if these new actions result in the further improvement needed or if more still needs to be done.

The governing body is evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. The Chair of the Governing Body rightly recognises the need to improve the way they work, to enable a sharper focus on improving the school. Suitable plans for restructuring the governing body are being developed and an external review has been requested of the local authority. Your new approaches for checking and reporting pupil progress will give governors more information to help them hold you to account for teaching and achievement more effectively.

External support

You value the support of a local authority officer and other local authority services, including that to develop your electronic information systems for recording pupils' achievement. However, the local authority's capacity is limited so the support is not always available as quickly as needed. You are making good use of your links with other local schools and have just started a 'talk 4 writing' project with some of them. You are starting to make links with primary schools in London who have faced similar challenges to yours.

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

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Her Majesty's Inspector