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Diane Elcock
Acting Headteacher
Dunstall Hill Primary School
Dunstall Avenue
Wolverhampton
WV6 0NH

Dear Miss Elcock

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dunstall Hill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 September 2014, 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 18 June 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:

- conduct an immediate review of all aspects of safeguarding, including safer recruitment practices and child protection procedures to ensure that all policies and procedures comply with current legal requirements
- establish clarity with the local authority about the capacity of the governing body to carry out their legal responsibilities and to act swiftly to further strengthen governance
- separate responsibilities in the action plan for monitoring and evaluation and set explicit deadlines for the completion of tasks
- inject more rigour into monitoring and evaluation so that it is systematic and the evidence gathered feeds into a thorough and accurate assessment of the school's work, particularly the quality of teaching.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, four governors, including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including information about safeguarding, teacher recruitment and pupils' achievement, as well as a review of pupils' work. You accompanied me on several short visits to classrooms to observe pupils' learning in lessons.

Context

Since the school's previous section 5 inspection there have been several changes to the leadership team with a new reading coordinator appointed. Three new teachers joined the school in September 2014. The substantive headteacher resigned her position at the end of the summer term. You continue to act as headteacher while the governors seek to appoint a new headteacher.

Main findings

You are fully aware of the amount of work that needs to be done to make sure that the school improves. You have drawn up plans that, helpfully, are appropriately matched to the findings from your most recent inspection report. These lay out the school's direction and aims in a suitably staged journey. However, the actions taken so far have not resulted in rapid improvement because the planned actions are not being followed up quickly enough or with sufficient rigour. Neither is there a clear and agreed overview of how activities will be monitored and evaluated.

You do not always ensure that areas for development are acted upon or that all teachers make the required changes quickly enough. For instance, you introduced training for teachers to improve their ability to teach phonics. This training took place in July 2014 but no one has checked whether teachers have implemented the recommended changes correctly.

You and other senior leaders have set up programmes and support to improve the help provided for pupils who speak English as an additional language. The local authority language specialist is working with teachers to raise the quality of teaching for these groups of pupils. It is too early to see the impact of this work. You have made links with a teaching school and enrolled some teachers on improvement programmes.

You have introduced a new format for teachers to use when they plan mathematics, reading and writing lessons. Although this has heightened teachers' understanding of the need to plan according to the requirements of the new National Curriculum, their skills in using this information is not developing quickly enough. A scrutiny of

teachers' planning indicates that not all teachers are implementing the new requirements.

Although there has been an increased focus on helping pupils develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills, these changes have not been sufficient to ensure pupils in all classes make rapid progress. Work in reading, writing and mathematics books shows that in some classes, the work for more-able pupils is not challenging enough. On occasions, teachers do not show pupils the best way of improving their writing quickly or help pupils deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts.

Governors know that they require further training in understanding the information provided to them regarding pupils' achievement. Although the school has a safeguarding policy, many of the school's practices do not meet current guidelines. For example, no checks are made to ensure that staff have the right to work in the United Kingdom. Overseas checks are not completed and no checks are carried out to see if teachers have been prohibited from teaching. A scrutiny of teachers' files also showed many pieces of evidence were missing for example, references were not always kept on file or not taken up before appointment and where they are on file some do not provide all the information required. A full external review of governance is overdue and this is impeding governors' abilities to provide effective support and challenge. Governors do not have a clear understanding of their legal responsibilities and how these should be carried out.

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 is providing a level of support that is appropriate to the school's need. The school currently has 15 days support from the local authority. As a result of this visit, the local authority intends to carry out a full review of the school's leadership of safeguarding systems and governance to inform the level of support required in the next school year.

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

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector