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Mr Nigel Ashton
Headteacher
Leverhulme Community Primary School
Breightmet Drive
Breighmet
Bolton
Lancashire
BL2 6EE

Dear Mr Ashton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leverhulme Community Primary School, Bolton

Following my visit to your school on 15 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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:

- ensure that the analysis of performance data is further refined to enable key stakeholders to determine pupils' progress from their individual starting points
- make sure that the success criteria in the school's post-Ofsted action plan are sharper, enabling governors to easily measure the impact of the actions being taken to improve the school.

Evidence

At this visit, I met with you and your colleagues on the senior team, the teacher responsible for coordinating literacy at Key Stage 1 and a representative from the local authority to discuss the work you are all doing to further improve the school. I held meetings with four members of the governing body and a charming, friendly and polite group of Year 3 pupils eager to share with me the work in their books and, in addition, their opinions about the school. I took the opportunity to scrutinise a sample of Key Stage 1 pupils' writing from the previous academic year. This allowed me to evaluate the progress they had made in this aspect of literacy. I considered the school's latest post-Ofsted action plan, a report of the local authority's most recent review of the school and the minutes of two meetings of the joint local authority and governing body monitoring group. I examined the school's record of the checks made on the suitability of adults to work with children, to ensure that the new staff are included. You accompanied me on a tour of the school, enabling me to meet your colleagues and observe the children at work.

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been a number of changes in personnel. Three new teachers, six teaching assistants and one caretaker have all joined the staff.

Main findings

You, your colleagues and members of the governing body are passionately committed to Leverhulme and together you are driving forward your priorities for improving the school.

Senior leaders have put in place effective plans to raise pupils' achievement in writing, an area for improvement at Key Stage 1, identified by inspectors at the previous inspection. Pupils are grouped according to their writing ability in Year 2 as you and your colleagues believe that this allows teachers to plan, more sensitively, to meet their needs. You described how pupils are given targets to improve their writing, which are presented to them in a format they can easily understand. These targets are then carefully monitored by their teachers. Senior leaders firmly believe that as a result of this monitoring pupils who are falling behind are identified in a timely fashion and given support to help them catch up. The school reports that the reliability of teachers' assessments of the quality of pupils' writing is checked regularly. For example at weekly staff meetings teachers share their assessments of pupils' written work to ensure that their judgements are consistent. Senior leaders have also forged links with a successful primary school, in a neighbouring local authority, with the expressed intention of using staff expertise in that school to further assure the accuracy of teachers' assessment of writing standards. You and your colleagues are of the opinion that writing in the school has been reinvigorated

with the introduction of 'Big Write'. This gives opportunities for pupils to practise the key skills associated with interesting and effective writing and use them in their own work. The impact of these developments is encouraging. The school's data indicating that pupils' progress in writing, by the end of Key Stage 1, increased noticeably in 2014. This assessment is reinforced by the work I saw in pupils' books.

In the sample of books scrutinised I noted that work is marked regularly. There are well established routines for pupils' to follow up their teachers' comments and make the work even better, accelerating their progress.

Senior leaders systems for collecting data on pupils' performance and sharing it with key stakeholders have been refined in the light of the inspection findings. Teachers' assessment of their pupils' attainment and progress is collected, at least, every half-term. These data are carefully analysed, put into an accessible format and then distributed to senior and subject leaders, class-teachers and the governing body. In my meeting with four governors they confirmed that the new mechanism for analysing and sharing data is enabling them to hold senior leaders and their colleagues more robustly to account for the standards achieved by the pupils. However, although the data analysis is thorough, it does not make clear the progress pupils have made from their individual starting points.

In response to the areas for improvement identified in the most recent inspection report, senior leaders have produced a bespoke 'post Ofsted' action plan. The plan consists of a clear set of improvement priorities, allied to the actions identified personnel will take, to improve the school. However, some of the success criteria by which governors can measure the success of these actions are not sharp enough. As a result, there is a lack of clarity around the anticipated impact these actions will have on pupils' achievement. The targets for pupils' progress in the plan, particularly at Key Stage 2 appear ambitious; however, they reinforce senior leaders' and governors' high expectations of what they believe pupils can achieve.

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 working effectively with the school to assist senior leaders and governors to further their plans to improve the school. A joint working group consisting of governors and representatives of the local authority have started to meet in order to monitor the school's progress against each of the priorities in the post Ofsted action-plan and help maintain the pace of change. Senior leaders have also commissioned the services of an external consultant who is providing them with an effective additional source of support and challenge.

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

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry

Her Majesty's Inspector