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Karen Elliot
Headteacher
Long Knowle Primary School
Blackwood Avenue
Wednesfield
Wolverhampton
WV11 1EB

Dear Ms Elliot

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Long Knowle Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 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 second 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- sustain the improvements in leadership, including governance, and continue the robust focus on improving the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement
- ensure that feedback to teachers about their work identifies the precise actions needed to help pupils of different abilities make faster progress
- further strengthen the improvement plan by using the grade descriptions for good achievement in the inspection handbook to make sure that the targets in the plan match what is needed for achievement to be 'good'.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior and subject leaders, a group of pupils and the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Governing Body. I

also met with a representative from the local authority. A range of documentation was reviewed including feedback to staff following lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work and the latest information about pupils' achievement. You joined me on brief visits to classrooms to review pupils' learning and talk to pupils about their work. The school improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

Since my last visit there have been significant changes to staffing. You became the headteacher on 1st September 2014. A new deputy headteacher joined the school at the same time. Three teachers left the school at the end of August and two new teachers joined the school on 1st September. The governing body are in the process of recruiting an assistant headteacher to further strengthen the leadership team. For different reasons, five governors have left the governing body. One new governor has joined the governing body.

Main findings

Despite significant challenges, you and other senior leaders have responded to the issues raised in the previous monitoring inspection with a sense of urgency and a determination to succeed. You have revised the system used to check and record pupils' progress. You are now able to identify the progress, over time, of different groups and individual pupils more easily. As a result, teachers are clear about what is expected of them and how they will be held accountable for pupils' achievement.

Systems to check the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement have been refocused so that they take account of the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. There is a comprehensive calendar of monitoring activities across the term. It shows clearly who will be involved and what they will do. Governors recognise the need for the pace of change to continue to accelerate. Their decision to appoint an assistant headteacher signifies their commitment to sustaining the improvements in leadership.

You have taken swift steps to strengthen the quality of teaching through new appointments and internal redeployments. You have established a cycle of coaching and team-teaching so that all teachers can learn from the best practice in the school. You have organised training for staff and introduced individual plans for teachers to support their further development. Your records show that teaching has improved since the previous monitoring visit. This is confirmed by your latest assessment information which shows that, across the school, rates of progress are accelerating and more pupils are working at the levels expected for their age, particularly in reading. Nevertheless, you recognise that there is more work to do to further improve the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement. At present, written feedback to teachers about their work does not always identify the precise actions needed to help pupils of different abilities make faster progress.

Your amended school improvement plan is now focused on the key areas for improvement. Suitable actions to address all areas for improvement are identified within the plan. The plan has appropriate milestones and quantifiable targets to help you, and governors, to check the school's progress. However, it is not clear that in achieving these targets the school will be in a position to be judged good at the next inspection. The plan should be refined further to include the grade descriptions for good achievement from the inspection handbook so that the targets in the plan match what is needed for the school to be judged good.

The learning environment has significantly improved since my previous monitoring visit. Pupils talk positively about this change. Their comments include, 'The new boards in our class help us to learn' and 'the writer of the week board is changed more now. You can look at the board and think 'I did that' and be proud.' As a result, more pupils are beginning to demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.

The governing body is fully involved in the drive for improvement. Governors have acted quickly to strengthen the ways in which they evaluate how well the school is doing and to increase the level of challenge. A small group of governors meet frequently to check the school's progress against the targets set in the improvement plan. Documentation shows that governors are asking challenging questions about assessment information. The governing body has undertaken a skills audit and organised appropriate training so that governors can quickly acquire the skills needed to support and challenge school leaders further.

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 have received a good level of support and challenge from the local authority. Regular visits from your school improvement officer have helped you to continue to move the school forward despite recent challenges. Local authority review meetings and reports have helped you to focus on the main areas of weakness and take suitable action. Your local school support network has also contributed to the school's stability and continued improvement.

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