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Mrs Rabia Patel
The Headteacher
County Bridge Primary School
Anson road
Walsall
WS2 9UP

Dear Mrs Patel

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to County Bridge Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 February 2015, 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 October 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- make sure that the governing body, as a matter of urgency, undertakes its restructuring so that it is more streamlined and effective in carrying out its monitoring activities
- ensure that the good pace and quality of the monitoring of teaching and pupils' achievement undertaken by the headteacher and senior leaders is backed up by the same level of scrutiny from the governing body
- focus more effort now on improving pupils' achievement in reading, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, so that it matches the pace of improvement currently evident in writing and mathematics.

Evidence

During the inspection I visited lessons with you and held meetings with senior leaders, two governors, including the Chair, and two of the local authority's education improvement advisers. We discussed the actions action taken since the inspection in October 2014 and I also met with three more members of your leadership team and a senior member of a good local primary school who is supporting and consulting staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage. I scrutinised the school development plan and subject action plans and checked pupil assessment and performance data. You also kindly arranged for me to review a sample of pupils' writing books.

Context

One full-time teacher, the assistant headteacher, left the school at the end of the Autumn Term 2014. A part-time teacher joined in January 2015 and was appointed as the inclusion manager responsible for coordinating special educational needs provision.

Main findings

You have been very proactive since the inspection in October 2014. Together with senior leaders, you have already undertaken effective monitoring and accurate evaluations of the quality of teaching. This is leading to improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics. Leaders and teachers gather accurate assessments of pupils' learning and the data collected together with regular reviews of pupils' work show that pupils are making better progress compared with previous years. Leaders have stepped up the intensity of monitoring to make sure that pupils are achieving as well as they should. Pupils make slower progress in reading compared with writing and mathematics, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Gaps still remain between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in reading compared with others, and the most able pupils should be reaching higher reading standards.

The school's development and action plans have clear targets and measures of success. Senior and middle leaders use these to check the impact of the school's actions on improving teaching. There are regular half-termly pupil progress reviews which expect teachers to prepare assessments of pupils' progress and performance. This is raising expectations, improving teachers' knowledge and use of assessment, and is increasingly helping teachers to plan work for pupils that matches their needs and abilities.

Governors are committed and keen to move the school forward. The governing body is currently, and rightly, considering a restructuring. This is timely given that the school's previous two inspections judged that it requires improvement, and issues were previously raised about the effectiveness of governance. The governing body is

planning to adopt a more systematic approach to the way it scrutinises the school's work that is more efficient and streamlined compared with its previous committee structure. Following some recent training and support, governors are responding and starting to improve the way they gather and use first-hand evidence. This includes reviews of pupil performance data to challenge the school's leaders about the impact of the actions being taken to raise achievement and improve teaching.

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's education improvement advisers are being reorganised. The previous adviser supported the school well. The school is currently receiving support from an interim adviser who recently joined the authority. The authority plans to support the governing body during its restructuring, this is necessary to ensure that the governing body complies with statutory requirements when considering re-constitution and its composition. A good range of support has been provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage by a teacher from a good local primary school. The headteacher is also working with other headteachers as part of a cluster of schools, providing further opportunities for leaders and staff to see and share good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector