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Mrs Ruth Foster
Headteacher
Ash Green Primary School
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Trentham
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 8BX

Dear Mrs Foster

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ash Green Primary School, Stoke-On-Trent

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2013. 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:

- build on the current programme of lesson monitoring and scrutiny of pupils' work to make sure that evaluations of teaching are always linked to the progress and achievement of pupils
- focus more training and support for teachers to help them measure how much progress pupils are making in lessons and over time
- identify the most effective teachers and leaders who have secure subject knowledge in English and mathematics so they can share best practice and provide objective evaluations of the quality of learning in lessons.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your deputy headteacher and the two teachers who have responsibility for managing English and mathematics. I also met two class teachers, one of whom shares responsibility with the early years' leader for managing phonics teaching. I met with two senior representatives of the local authority's school improvement team and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body. After visiting classes with you and the deputy headteacher, I reviewed and considered assessments of pupils' progress and performance and scrutinised the school's action plans.

Context

There has been a significant turnover of leadership and staffing since the school's last monitoring inspection in October 2013. The headteacher joined the school in June 2014 to replace the previous headteacher who retired at the end of 2013. Eight teachers have left and three have joined the school. A significant number of teaching assistants and teachers have left as a result of necessary staff restructuring because the school previously had a significant budget deficit that was not sustainable.

Main findings

Senior leaders, staff and governors have worked closely with the local authority and done a great deal to improve the school since the previous monitoring inspection in October 2013. Together with governors you and your leadership team have acted on the recommendations set out in the previous monitoring report. For example, individual improvement plans for teachers are in place and this is resulting in greater consistency of practice. There is now routine and systematic monitoring undertaken by staff with management responsibilities. Action plans provide targets and measures to gauge the impact of actions on improving teaching, but some measures of success do not always refer enough to pupils' achievement. Although assessment systems have improved well teachers do not yet have a consistent understanding of how best to measure progress during lessons and over time. This is important as it will enable teachers to plan lessons that focus more sharply on how best to teach pupils the next steps in their learning.

The most recent national assessments of pupils' progress point to marked improvements to their achievement compared with previous years. There is convincing evidence in pupils' work books and performance data that pupils are increasingly attaining higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. There is an increasing amount of teaching that is strong enough to sustain this improvement.

Governance is improving. The governing body has restructured its committees which are more streamlined and focused on identifying pupil outcomes and teachers' performance. The newly established steering group enables governors to challenge

the school's leaders so they are more accountable for the achievement of pupils across the school.

Teachers with management responsibilities check, monitor and support staff when scrutinising pupils' work and observing lessons. The school's action plans help to guide these monitoring activities and the focus is rightly on improving achievement in English and mathematics. It is important now that those responsible for monitoring and supporting staff are knowledgeable and good practitioners in their own right so they can both challenge and influence the work of other staff.

Pupils are keen to do well and are exceptionally well behaved and attentive in lessons. It was no surprise to find high attendance rates and pupils that are energised by the work provided in some of the lessons observed during this monitoring inspection.

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 provides good support and is working closely with leaders and governors to secure sustained improvement. The budget is being managed very well and the school will no longer be in deficit as a result of effective staff restructuring. The appointment of a business manager has also been effective as it has helped the headteacher to concentrate her efforts on important priorities that focus on improving teaching and learning. The local authority has actively sought to establish effective partnerships with other schools. This has resulted in a proposed collaborative working with a multi-academy trust which has the potential for staff and governors to see and share best practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of People for Stoke-On-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector