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Mark Leonard
Acting Headteacher
Bushmead Primary School
Bushmead Road
Eaton Socon
St Neots
PE19 8BT

Dear Mr Leonard

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bushmead Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 June 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 February 2015. 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:

- provide governance support and training, so that governors can ask more relevant questions that focus on the core issues of improving outcomes for pupils
- ensure targets and milestones in the action plan are more sharply focused so improvement is hastened
- arrange an external review of the standard of pupils' behaviour and the procedures for managing behaviour and safety
- ensure that the handover to the new headteacher is smooth and thorough, so that the pace of school improvement is accelerated through this transition period.
- provide training to teachers, so they are accurate about the expectations in the quality of writing, especially in Key Stage 2.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the newly appointed headteacher, four representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. You took me on a tour of the school; we visited every class to observe teaching and learning and look at pupils' books. I observed the pupils in assembly, on the playground at breaktime and lunchtime. I examined a number of school documents and checked the school's single central register.

Context

Since the last inspection, the governors have appointed a new headteacher, who takes up his role in September 2015. You have been appointed as the deputy headteacher, effective from the same date. One teacher left the school at Easter. One teacher has returned from maternity leave. There have been a number of resignations from key leadership positions, and you already have plans in place for replacements, but these are yet to take effect.

Main findings

All staff and governors have contributed to the school action plan. You have rightly prioritised the issues from the previous inspection, set dates and considered how you will measure the success of your actions. You have increased the accountability of staff for pupils' achievement by implementing stronger monitoring systems and checking regularly pupils' progress. Leaders now need to create a greater sense of urgency by evaluating and shortening timescales so that the rate of improvement is increased.

Much of the work on improvements has just started and the impact is yet to be clearly seen, especially for leadership and management. Governors have rightly focussed on employing a substantive headteacher for September. There now needs to be a clear transition in place so that the momentum of improvement is maintained and accelerated. Although governors are experienced, they are conscious that they have not been able to analyse data as effectively as they should, nor question information well enough, to show they focus on the core priorities of teaching and learning. Governors should seek appropriate training so they can carry out their role to greater effect.

The new feedback and marking policy is beginning to impact upon the practice of most teachers. However, it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of this very recent change.

With the support of the local authority, you have taken action to improve the structure to the phonics teaching for the younger children in the school. They are now receiving quality provision in small groups, so that teaching is targeted and

appropriate for their age and ability. Evidence seen in school data indicates that the proportion of pupils on track to achieve the required level in the Year 1 screening check is higher than last year.

In the early years, greater use is being made of the outdoor area, following the changes you have made to the equipment. The early years staff have written an action plan and are providing more challenging opportunities as a result.

You have introduced more extended writing opportunities for the pupils in the school. Where pupils have the chance to write at length, they are taking advantage of these opportunities and the quality of their writing is showing early signs of improvement. More information and training is required now to ensure that all teachers understand, and have the same expectations on the quality of written work, so you can iron out inconsistencies.

I have seen evidence on this monitoring visit that raises serious concerns about the behaviour of pupils. For example, pupils are slow to respond to the reasonable requests of adults, and are often disrespectful to adults during assemblies and at breaktimes. Some of the behaviour of the older pupils at playtimes is much too boisterous and goes unchecked by the adults. I have asked the local authority to assist you by carrying out a review of behaviour, and the school's policies and procedures, as a matter of urgency.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You are now working closely with the local authority and value the support it is providing to help you make improvements. The local authority is giving good support, and impact can be seen in the early years and in the teaching of phonics.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Cambridge Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the governing body
- Cambridge - Local Authority