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Mrs Valerie Rose
Interim Headteacher
Malorees Junior School
Christchurch Avenue
London
NW6 7PB

Dear Mrs Rose

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Malorees Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 13 October, 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 March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and interim executive board (IEB) members are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection.

The school should take immediate action to:

- set aspirational and quantifiable targets for all ability groups, based on pupils' starting points
- identify measurable milestones to regularly assess what progress is being made
- make sure that all teachers implement whole-school improvement strategies in full and respond to individual feedback about their performance
- hold middle leaders to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility
- use assessments accurately to set work at the right level of challenge for all ability groups in lessons so that progress is speeded up.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with senior leaders, the chair and other members of the IEB and a senior local authority officer. A series of short visits to classrooms were undertaken with the interim headteacher, where the quality of teaching in lessons and pupils' attitudes to learning were observed. The views of staff and pupils were also taken into account through informal and formal meetings. The school's post-Ofsted action plan and a range of documents were scrutinised. These included information on the progress of pupils, attendance rates, minutes of meetings and the single central record of the checks made on the suitability of adults to work with children.

Context

There have been considerable changes to staffing since the previous inspection. A new interim headteacher and new interim deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2015, replacing a consultant headteacher and interim headteacher of school from a local primary school. The governing body has been replaced by an IEB in 2015. This was as a result of a warning notice issued by the local authority in December 2014 following serious concerns about the effectiveness of governance. Three new teachers have recently been appointed. There is an ongoing investigation into potential historical financial mismanagement of the school.

Main findings

You have made a positive start in your new appointment as interim headteacher, as has the interim deputy headteacher. You know what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching and speed up pupils' progress. These are outlined in your action plan, addressing all the areas of weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Nonetheless, this plan lacks measurable and challenging targets to make sure that all groups of pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Without measurable regular checks, you and other leaders are not able to assess the progress being made to secure much needed improvements.

In our discussions, and as reflected in your action plan, it is clear that the role of middle leaders is significantly underdeveloped. This has slowed down the pace of improvement work. Too much depends on you and your deputy. Middle leaders are not held fully to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in English and mathematics, or for the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. These leaders do not have a good enough overview of the progress different groups of pupils make or whether the impact of improvement strategies is good enough to make sure that underachievement is eradicated and significant gaps in attainment narrowed. As a result, overall achievement declined in 2015. Progress has been too slow and pupils do not make good or better progress. You and members of the IEB are under no illusions that there is considerable work to be done to make sure that the school is judged good at the next inspection.

The IEB is determined to make sure that this school improves rapidly. The members of the IEB have supported and challenged leaders in the past and are supporting and challenging current leaders now. They have made sure that a performance management cycle has been implemented, so that pay is directly linked to performance. Together with senior leaders, they have begun to eradicate underperformance at leadership level and in teaching. They have wisely appointed you and your deputy because you both have a proven track record of improving schools. Their skill set ensures that they know what works well in all areas of the school's performance. They have also secured financial stability. There is now a healthy carry forward, which means that pupils now have the equipment and resources that they need to learn effectively. The premises are being improved so that pupils have appropriate facilities in which to learn and play.

However, the quality of teaching remains too variable and some is not securing improvements in pupils' achievement rapidly enough. Some teachers have low expectations for pupils' presentation and learning. Too often, all ability groups complete the same work. More-able pupils are not challenged to think hard about their work. Less-able pupils and those with additional learning needs often find the work too difficult. Activities do not systematically build on what pupils already know and can do. There remain too few opportunities for pupils to write at length in both English and in other subjects. In the joint visit to lessons we undertook, work in pupils' books confirms there is little evidence to show that pupils use and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects and, therefore, have few opportunities to deepen their understanding in this subject.

Teachers undertake a wide range of training opportunities, including networking and observing good or better practice, as well as having advice from the local authority's school partnership team. They are well supported by your deputy, who coaches them in their planning and teaching, yet subsequent checks on teaching and learning demonstrate that some teachers are not adhering to whole-school policies and procedures. Other teachers need significant support to be able to consistently implement improvement strategies effectively. This is particularly so in the quality of feedback to pupils, which can lack precise guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. As a result, significant weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection remain key concerns.

Previous leaders made sure that an external review of the pupil premium was undertaken. Recommendations focused on securing quality teaching and targeted support for this group to boost their progress. You have devised an action plan based on these recommendations and your deputy is beginning to make sure that they are being implemented. However, you recognise that there is more to do to improve the quality of teaching in lessons. This is to ensure that this vulnerable group of learners catch up with their peers and the gap is closed quickly.

We agreed that behaviour is improving and that pupils have positive attitudes to their learning when activities are interesting and pitched at the right level of difficulty. Most of the time, pupils are keen to do well and achieve their best. However, if they find the work too easy or too hard, and teachers do not adjust the activity accordingly, some pupils become distracted. This is not always dealt with appropriately and valuable learning time is lost.

Nonetheless, pupils told me that they feel their views are now listened to and valued. Both the school prefects and school councillors say that they meet regularly with staff to discuss the work of the school. Attendance and punctuality have improved. You have made sure there is a prompt start to lessons. Teachers meet their pupils on the playground and take them into class five minutes earlier than previously.

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

The local authority continues to provide much needed support and advice. It has brokered and financed additional leadership capacity from the headteacher and deputy headteacher of a local primary school. The local authority continues to finance additional senior leadership capacity with the recent appointments of the current interim headteacher and deputy headteacher. Consultants provide additional capacity for leaders at other levels, specifically with the special needs coordinator. The local authority was instrumental in setting up the IEB. The chair works for the local authority and the Brent Schools Partnership. This means that she is in an excellent position to promote further links with good and outstanding providers to work with the school in the future. A senior local authority officer attends all IEB meetings. Monthly meetings to check the work of leaders are closely focused on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Brent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds

Her Majesty's Inspector