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Mandy Whitehouse
Headteacher
Riverview Primary School
Suffolk Road
Burton-on-Trent
DE15 9HR

Dear Mrs Whitehouse

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Riverview Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 29 April 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 November 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. Plans are appropriately focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take further action to:

- make sure that extra funding received for disadvantaged pupils is targeted effectively to ensure the gap between disadvantaged and other pupils closes rapidly
- link more closely the evidence from analysis of pupils' work and assessment information when making judgements on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching
- make sure those leaders who have responsibility for improving teaching across the school have the time to follow up promptly any areas for development identified in monitoring activities
- make sure that teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide work for pupils with the correct level of difficulty for their ability.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including information about pupils' achievement, as well as a review of pupils' work. You joined me on brief visits to classrooms to look at teaching.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit the headteacher retired and the deputy headteacher left after securing promotion. An interim headteacher was appointed until December 2014. You started in January 2015. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed. Three members of staff left at Easter. A new leader who oversees provision and progress for pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs started at Easter.

Main findings

Since your appointment in January, you with close support from the local authority, have taken some appropriate actions and have:

- strengthened governance by recruiting new governors
- revised the advice given to teachers on how to mark pupils' work and how to check they are making at least expected progress
- helped teachers develop the necessary skills to teach phonics with increasing effectiveness
- made sure that pupils read to adults in school more regularly

You rightly have a clear focus on raising pupils' attainment. However, actions to ensure that disadvantaged pupils do as well as their classmates and other pupils nationally are at an early stage of development. Currently this group of pupils are around six months behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, this group of pupils are almost a year behind other pupils in school and six months behind other pupils nationally in mathematics and writing. In reading and in spelling, grammar and punctuation the gap is well over a year. Children in the early years who are disadvantaged do significantly less well than other pupils with only 14% of disadvantaged children reaching a good level of development. You are also aware that these pupils do not attend regularly and this is affecting their attainment and progress. Again the steps taken to improve attendance are too new to see an impact.

The correct things are being put in place but it is too soon for these changes to have made a significant difference to pupils' achievement. For example, you are providing appropriate training to improve teachers' knowledge of the sounds that letters make

(phonics) and have reintroduced a highly structured phonic programme. Reading corners in all classrooms have been improved, as a result reading has a higher profile in the school. Pupils are beginning to read more widely and more regularly. You are aware that some inconsistencies remain, particularly in making sure pupils are making rapid and sustained progress and have planned further training to eradicate weaknesses in teachers' practice.

Visits to classrooms to observe teaching show that teaching is beginning to improve. It is not improving as quickly as you would wish because there is inconsistent practice within and across year groups. For example, teachers are still unsure of how to check that pupils are making progress against the requirements of the new curriculum. You are aware that some teachers' limited knowledge of the new curriculum means that work is not always set at the right level for pupils; sometimes it is too easy and for other pupils work is sometimes too hard. This results in pupils not being challenged sufficiently. This is particularly true in the teaching of mathematics.

You have introduced a new system to record pupils' learning and progress over time. This system is helping to keep track of the progress of different groups of pupils. However, you and other leaders do not check the accuracy of these assessments by checking work in pupils' books often enough. Where this has been done, findings are still not used well enough to improve teaching, particularly in the teaching of reading. Here, work in pupils' books does not match the teachers' assessment of their attainment and progress. The picture in mathematics and writing is marginally better but still requires significant improvement.

The assessment information gathered on pupils' learning and progress is not used by you and other leaders to plan actions to make sure that teaching improves quickly so that pupils make good progress. Where plans are in place, your expectation of the impact of training or changes in policy and practice is vague. You have rightly planned support and training for the newly appointed middle leaders to secure the necessary knowledge to enable them to lead and have a positive impact on teaching and learning as quickly as possible.

Governors have increased their checking of the work of the school. They have undertaken visits to classrooms to see teaching and they have received reports from teachers in charge of year groups. Governors are clear about where things have improved and where further work is needed. For example, they understand that systems to check on the effectiveness of the work of teachers in the classroom are not precise enough and have taken appropriate steps to improve these systems.

External support

Since the section 5 inspection, the local authority has provided an increased level of support to the school. The local authority has rightly commissioned further work to support the newly established leadership team. The local authority officer has a good knowledge of the school and understands the strengths and areas of further need well.

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

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

cc. Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
cc. Local authority