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Jane Cartlidge
Headteacher
Pitsford Primary School
Moulton Road,
Pitsford
Northampton,
NN6 9AU

Dear Ms Cartlidge

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pitsford Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 December 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:

- consolidate the links with the partner primary school's leaders and governors in order to sustain the current pace of improvement
- provide more opportunities for teachers to see and share best practice
- make sure that the governing body steps up its monitoring activities and gathers more first-hand evidence to hold the staff more fully to account for the school's actions and performance.

Evidence

In addition to visiting all three classes, meetings were held to discuss the actions taken since the school's inspection in December 2013. These included meetings with

the headteacher, two representatives of the governing body, including the Acting Chair, one of the local authority's senior school improvement managers and the headteacher of a good local primary school who is working in partnership with this school as part of a soft federation between the two schools. The post-Ofsted improvement plan was evaluated. Her Majesty's Inspector also scrutinised documents related to the monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress.

Context

The headteacher will be leaving the school at the end of this Spring Term 2014 to take up another headship. The governing body has agreed to appoint, on a temporary basis, the headteacher of the partner primary school to lead the school.

Main findings

The post-Ofsted plans rightly focus on improving the quality of teaching. Observations of teaching and pupil performance data show that improvements are already happening. A strong feature of the school's improvement plan is the way teachers evaluate the impact of their actions on their classroom practice and pupils' learning. The governing body, in collaboration with the local authority, has put in place effective arrangements to secure a partnership, or soft federation, with a good school. This provides opportunities for the school to maintain strong leadership after the current headteacher leaves, and it utilises the services of an effective and experienced headteacher from a good school. This is a welcome development and offers stability with the potential of building on current improvements. A thorough external review of governance has already been undertaken and governors have responded well to its recommendations. The governing body recognises that it still needs to formalise its monitoring procedures so that more governors gather first-hand evidence of the impact of actions being taken to raise pupils' achievement and sustain improvements to the quality of 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 is providing the right balance of challenge and support. The senior school improvement manager has been prudent and effective in recommending the current partnership with another local primary school, as this is a good school that has strong leadership. The support provided by other links formed locally by a cluster of partner schools has the potential to provide more opportunities for teachers and support staff to see and share good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector