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Chris Davis
Headteacher
Francis Baily Primary School
Skillman Drive
Thatcham
RG19 4GG

Dear Mr Davis

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Francis Baily Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 May 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 January 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. The school should take further action to:

- clarify the role of the governors in monitoring the progress the school is making and the impact of leaders' actions in securing improvement.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders and three members of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated a range of documentation including the school action plan, information relating to the monitoring of teaching and governors' minutes. You took me on a tour of the school and we made brief visits to most classes.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders are working together as an effective team and have responded positively to the findings of the inspection. You are determined to bring about the necessary improvements to the school and you have communicated a clear sense of purpose and direction.

There is a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching and raising expectations of the progress pupils will make. You are using a range of information including lesson observations and work in pupils' books to form an accurate view of the quality of teaching across the school. Teachers have benefited from individualised and sustained training and support and as a result the standard of teaching is improving. The effective and skilfully designed coaching programme you have introduced is enabling teachers to share good practice and to be reflective and analytical about how they can improve their own practice. You have made important changes to the way teachers plan their lessons so that activities more closely match the needs of pupils and provide a greater level of challenge. Teachers are adapting their lessons more frequently when pupils are finding the work too difficult or too easy.

Teachers now check pupils' progress more frequently and thoroughly. Information about how well pupils are doing is being used more effectively to direct support to pupils and to check the difference this support is making. Meetings held to discuss pupils' progress are making teachers more accountable for the progress pupils make in their class. There is greater communication and awareness of pupils' performance between teachers and senior leaders.

You have remodelled the way you teach phonics (the sound letters and words make) across the school. You are assessing pupils' progress more frequently and rigorously and then adapting teaching to speed up progress and close gaps in pupils' understanding. Useful training provided by the local authority has enabled teachers and teaching assistants to teach phonics in ways that engage and motivate pupils more effectively. Standards in reading are improving.

The school improvement plan is detailed and focuses on the key areas for improvement. It has clear measurable long-term targets and sets out what you expect to see at key points over time. However, the plan does not make clear enough what the governors' role will be in checking the progress the school is making. Nor does it explain how governors will challenge senior leaders over whether their actions are bringing about rapid improvement.

You have reviewed and simplified the school's behaviour policy and as a result there is a more consistent approach across the school to address poor behaviour and to reward good behaviour. Your recently introduced log to record incidents of poor behaviour shows fewer pupils being involved in such incidents.

Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. The recent addition of three new governors has further strengthened the expertise of the governing body. Members of the governing body are now linked to specific areas of the school's work and they plan to use this structure to more fully check and challenge the progress the school is making.

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

Senior leaders have an effective working relationship with the local authority and it has provided well-targeted support to the school. The headteacher has benefited from useful support from a local authority adviser to refine the school improvement plan. Improvements in the teaching of phonics have been supported by valuable training from the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Lisa Moore

Her Majesty's Inspector