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Ms Claire Temple
Headteacher
Sandbrook Primary School
Stavordale Road
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Merseyside
CH46 9PS

Dear Ms Temple

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sandbrook Primary School, Wirral

Following my visit to your school on 3 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 November 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:

- Improve the standards of cleanliness and general tidiness.
- In collaboration with the local authority, prepare plans to improve on the current dilapidated standard of the accommodation.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, members of the Governing Body including the Chair of Governors, and a

representative of the local authority. The school's improvement plans were examined and discussed. The inspector visited all classrooms briefly, accompanied by the headteacher.

Context

Since the inspection, an acting deputy-headteacher has been appointed pending the appointment of a permanent post-holder.

Main findings

The school is steadily overcoming the issues within teaching and management that have held it back. The vision for the school held by the headteacher and governors is beginning to be realised. The pace of improvement is accelerating.

The school has built well on the findings of the recent inspection. Improvement plans are concise and of good quality. Notably, they are aimed directly at improving outcomes for pupils. Actions have clear, short timescales. Evidence of progress that result from monitoring activities by leaders is collected so that staff and governors know what has been achieved.

Much of the focus on improvement since the inspection has been on identifying the aspects of teaching that prevent it from being consistently good and resolving them. Much has been achieved in a short time. The focus is on support – internal and external – but there is also a strong drive to deliver results quickly: challenging targets have been set to improve teaching in a matter of weeks.

Progress has been made in broadening leadership. The appointment of an acting deputy-headteacher is a significantly positive step in this direction. Teachers and teaching assistants are coming forward with new ideas, keen to move the school on. A middle tier of leadership is developing. More is expected of staff with leadership posts to justify their leadership allowances. The sole dependence on the headteacher to drive improvement, a concern identified in the recent inspection, is, therefore, being reduced.

Pupils were well-behaved and fully involved with their work during the brief visits to classrooms. Pupils took care with their work and presentation in exercise books was neat. The school at work had a positive, relaxed feel. There was clear evidence over the lunchtime break that the school is successful in supporting pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties through the steps it was taking to ensure such pupils enjoy their break.

The Governing Body displays an impressive determination to get the school to good. Governors recognise that the school has been less successful than it should have been in the past. They share the headteacher's vision for the pupils and for the

community and are determined to see this come to fruition. They are fully prepared to hold all responsible to account.

Governors and staff are handicapped by the poor condition of the building, which suffers from a lack of investment over many years. Matters are made worse by poor standards of cleanliness and general untidiness. A start has been made to upgrade aspects of the accommodation; for example, by refurbishing the toilets, introducing carpets to classrooms and organising resources for teaching better. However, there is a danger that the improvements in teaching and leadership will be undermined by a low quality working environment.

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 effective support and challenge for the school. It is using its advisory and specialist staff well to provide intensive, short-term support for teaching and longer-term support to develop middle and senior leadership. The school has sought additional external links. It works in partnership with other schools within its local cluster to provide wider opportunities for staff to engage with and learn from other teachers and leaders. It is most closely associated with an outstanding school, whose headteacher is a National Leader in Education.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Wirral and as below.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector