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Pamela Ashworth
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Dear Mrs Ashworth

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to John Grant School, Caister-on-Sea

Following my visit to your school on 1 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, four governors and the local authority senior adviser for complex needs and vulnerable learners. The inspector met informally with two groups of pupils during lunch time. The inspector also observed for a short time in a range of lessons in most areas of the school. The school improvement plan was evaluated and a range of documentation was reviewed including some pupils' work, moderation of assessment, samples of lesson observation feedback, and school improvement planning including subject action plans.

Context

Since the last inspection the deputy headteacher, previously seconded from another school, has been appointed as the permanent deputy headteacher. One temporary and two permanent teaching assistants, known within the schools as 'Co-educators',

have been appointed. A new teacher has been appointed for the Early Years Foundation Stage but has yet to take up his post.

Main findings

Senior leaders have taken effective actions to secure improvement and although progress was initially slow it is now increasing. The action plan has suitable focus on the main areas requiring improvement. The plan includes some measurable success criteria against which improvements can be measured but the evidence that will be used to support the evaluation is not always made clear. Evidence of pupils' work is not systematically gathered in a way that demonstrates their progress and this is hampering the ability of the senior team and governors to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions.

Senior leaders have taken some swift action to:

- provide opportunities for teachers to observe good and outstanding practice in other schools. This has helped to create a more consistent understanding of the key features that lead to good teaching. Recent observations have shown that this has helped some teachers improve the quality of their teaching.
- enable teachers to work together to help each other improve pupils' learning
- train teaching staff and some co-educators how to teach phonics.

The governors have a clear understanding of the necessary improvements required at the school. The school has had no contact from the National College of School Leadership about the recommended review of governance. The Governing Body have taken steps, working with the local authority governor services, to establish a clearer understanding of their responsibilities. They have identified the training needs to fulfil these responsibilities and have begun the training programme. As a result of some specific training about safeguarding governors now have a better understanding of the procedures that help keep pupils safe. Following the most recent meeting the Governing Body have identified the need to be more specific with the senior leadership team about the evidence required to evaluate whether the actions taken are making sufficient difference to the pupils' progress. There have been improvements in the effectiveness of the Governing Body but they would benefit from a full review of governance.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- increase the pace of improvement
- ensure evaluation is based firmly upon looking at improvements in pupils' learning and progress
- gather examples of each pupil's work consistently, so that pupils' progress can be monitored and evaluated more robustly.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Support from the local authority to ensure the school action plan is suitable for securing the necessary improvements, well monitored and evaluated has been slow. There was minimal support in the autumn term but this has increased for the current term. Suitable plans are now in place for regular monthly contact to support the school and keep a check on the pace of improvement. Governor services from the local authority have provided good bespoke training which has been well received and has improved governors' understanding of their responsibilities. HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- provide a full review of governance and, if external support for this is not forthcoming, HMI should work with the Governing Body to increase their understanding and ability to challenge the progress made by the pupils and quality of provision being put in place.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson
Her Majesty's Inspector