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19 March 2013

Elaine Hawes  
Saxmundham Primary School  
Brook Farm Road  
Saxmundham  
IP17 1XQ

Dear Mrs Hawes

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Saxmundham Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 March 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 December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other school leaders, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Checks were made on the school's systems for monitoring the performance of pupils and staff. The school improvement plan was evaluated, taking into account amendments made following the last inspection. A brief tour of the school was made, accompanied by the headteacher.

#### **Context**

Saxmundham Primary School is still working through the effects of school reorganisation. Pupils now remain at the school until the end of Year 6. The current Year 6 has a high proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs. This year-group will be the school's first cohort to take the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2.

Since the school was inspected in December 2012, one teacher has left and a permanent replacement has been appointed.

## **Main findings**

The school has revised its improvement plan to focus on the areas for improvement identified at the recent inspection. However, the school had already identified most of the areas for improvement for itself. Senior leaders and the governing body have become much more attuned to the information the school holds on pupils' attainment and progress. They now recognise that the Years 4, 5 and 6 have made slower than average progress since they began Key Stage 2. The changes they have made should mean that they will get earlier warning of any such problems in the future.

Pupils' progress will need to improve considerably if the school is to be judged good at its next inspection. The school is developing its expertise in meeting the needs of older pupils. It is getting to grips with the measures of performance used in Key Stage 2, and is increasingly focused on ensuring that as many pupils as possible make progress at or above the expected rate, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

The school has improved its use of assessment information. Checks have been made to ensure that teachers are assessing writing and mathematics accurately. Mental mathematics skills have been checked for each pupil. Assessment has been strengthened in Reception to provide a clearer sense of pupils' progress.

Staff training is being provided for teachers and teaching assistants to help pupils to become more independent in their learning. The recently introduced commercial mathematics scheme is providing pupils with more opportunities to consolidate their learning. Action is being taken to ensure that marking helps pupils to improve their work. In addition, the school has introduced weekly newsletters for each class to give parents and carers more information about the work that pupils are doing.

The school has appropriate systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Information about each pupil's attainment is entered into a computer database to provide summary information for leaders and governors, as well as details about the progress of each pupil. Senior leaders review the detailed information with each class teacher to identify any pupils who might have gaps in their knowledge or who might be falling behind. Extra teaching is beginning to help pupils to catch up. Senior leaders make regular lesson observations to identify the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. These take into account the expectations of the national teaching standards. The findings are summarised to identify any matters that need to be tackled with all staff. They are also used to provide individual feedback to each teacher.

The governing body is now holding senior leaders to account by reviewing the monitoring information and asking questions about any issues this identifies. It is establishing independent monitoring procedures and individual governors are assigned to monitor different aspects of the school's work.

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, I recommend that further action is taken to sharpen the improvement plan by:

- providing more detail in the section on developing guidance for staff on teaching different strands of mathematics
- making it clear who is leading each aspect of the improvement plan
- incorporating specific numerical targets to relevant improvement points in the action plan, including term-by-term targets for pupils' attainment and progress in each year-group.
- ensuring that the regular reviews of the improvement plan include an evaluation of progress against these numerical targets
- commissioning an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. The school has agreed to provide regular updates on pupils' progress. A second monitoring visit will be scheduled for the autumn term 2013.

### **External support**

The school is being supported and challenged appropriately by local authority advisers. A consultant has provided training for Early Years Foundation Stage teaching staff. The school is drawing on other schools for advice and to observe good practice. It is also taking advantage of training opportunities that provide a national perspective.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**