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Nicky Patrick
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Dear Mrs Patrick

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Burnham-on-Crouch Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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, the deputy headteacher, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The inspector toured the classrooms with the headteacher and spoke to pupils informally about their work. The school improvement plans were evaluated. Records of lesson observations, minutes of governing body meetings and the headteacher's reports to governors were also scrutinised.

Context

There have been no changes to the staffing of the school since the inspection in December 2012.

Main findings

The headteacher and other leaders have set high expectations for pupil progress which is above that expected nationally. This is necessary to ensure that Key Stage 2 pupils catch up on slower progress in the past.

There is a detailed cycle of monitoring which includes regular lesson observations, scrutiny of planning and review of progress and attainment data. Evaluations of lessons feed into detailed performance management reviews. Where teaching requires improvement however there are no clear training and improvement plans for individual teachers. Leaders track pupils' progress and attainment carefully and use this information to identify, with teachers, pupils who may be falling behind. Regular meetings are held to identify strategies to help pupils catch up quickly.

Teachers regularly compare their assessments of pupils' work with each other in order to help to improve their accuracy. Some assessments of writing are too generous however, and therefore the tracking data is not reliable. Pupils' books are scrutinised to check teachers' marking but leaders do not examine pupils' books to judge progress in their work. The evaluations of teaching over time rely on lessons observations and insecure achievement data alone.

Teachers work closely together within year groups to share good practice. The deputy headteacher demonstrates teaching and works with colleagues to improve their practice. The school has not yet formed partnerships with other schools in order to learn from good teaching elsewhere.

The school's improvement plans address all of the areas for improvement from the inspection in December 2012. They do not include, however, all of the school's planned actions. There are not enough measureable criteria to help governors judge how well the school is tackling weaknesses. There are too few deadlines or clear timescales to check the school is on track to achieve its targets.

The governing body knows the school and supports it well. They have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to challenge leaders effectively. Governors are very visible in the school and undertake their own monitoring activities including meeting with teachers and learning support assistants to more fully understand how writing is taught.

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:

- Review the school's development plans to ensure they contain the necessary detail about how and when improvements are going to be made as well criteria by which governors and others can measure the school's progress in addressing areas for improvement.
- Ensure that progress and attainment data are consistently reliable by training teachers to assess pupils' work accurately and by ensuring that leaders check the accuracy of assessments regularly.

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

External support

The school has requested a local authority review in order to support its own evaluation of progress. The local authority representative is new to working with the school and is planning to visit more regularly to support leadership. The local authority is providing training for three teachers to improve teaching. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body are attending local authority training to improve leadership.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector