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8 May 2013

Gerry Sexton, Headteacher
Paddocks Primary School
Rochfort Avenue
Newmarket
CB8 0DL

Dear Mr Sexton

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Paddocks Primary School, Suffolk local authority.

Following my visit to your school on 8 May 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.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2013.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the Key Stage 2 coordinator, two subject leaders, four representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan, monitoring records of teaching, teachers' planning and I looked at your preparation for subject leaders' training. In addition, you provided a tour of the school which included short visits to seven lessons.

Context

Since the inspection the deputy headteacher has returned from maternity leave.

Main findings

Your amendments to the school improvement plan show how you will tackle the weaknesses identified in the inspection report, within a year. You have used the feedback from the inspection to raise your expectations of teachers and pupils and

clarify your vision for the school now that it has become a primary school for pupils up to the age of 11. You have not yet shared your plans with parents and carers.

Ofsted inspectors identified teaching as an area needing improvement. In response, you have revised your teaching and learning policy and provided training for teachers to improve the clarity of their lesson objectives and their use of assessment and intervention. Your monitoring records indicate that this has been effective, but not for all staff. Where teaching is not good enough you have increased lesson observations and feedback, scrutinised planning and evaluated pupils' work more frequently. You have also arranged observations of strong teaching as part of the individual support plans you have provided. However, the success criteria do not identify precisely enough what pupils should know, understand or be able to do as a result of better teaching. This makes it harder for senior leaders and governors to assess improvements.

The deputy headteacher has prepared a useful training session for subject leaders designed to develop leadership and spread responsibility more widely in response to weaknesses identified in the inspection. You have not said enough in the improvement plan about how you will know that the training is effective. Your plans to look across the school at pupils' work do not include all subjects. This is missing an opportunity to ensure pupils develop and apply skills and knowledge across the curriculum. Displays of pupils' work seen during our tour of the school included pockets of good work in some subjects and year groups which need to be more widespread. Successful initiatives such as 'wow walls' of high quality work or 'look what we have done at home' displays to promote follow-up to learning at school, should be established in all classrooms by the end of term.

The governing body has set up a steering group to monitor the school's plans, and its members know what has been done and why. Governors are clear about strengths and weaknesses in teaching and following data training are confident about challenging underachievement. They are keen to help accelerate the school's improvement. The curriculum committee is prioritising improving pupils' understanding of diversity. Linked to this priority you have made good amendments to your plans following guidance from the local authority diversity adviser. You have also asked two members of staff to lead this work. These strategies provide a secure basis for improvement because plans and actions are supported by clear delegation of responsibility and are linked to the support and challenge provided by governors.

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:

- formulate a succinct version of the school's action plan for parents and carers
- make sure that success criteria are measurable, are focused on outcomes for pupils and include achievements across the curriculum

- monitor the quality of teaching by evaluating a wide range of evidence in addition to lesson observations, particularly teaching that is not yet good.

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

External support

Your links with a local primary school that has rapidly improved has helped to respond to the section 5 inspection strategically. The school's collaboration with the 'Newmarket Schools Together' initiative has contributed to the quality of teachers' professional development. You are drawing well on the support of the local authority in order to moderate judgements about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. In addition, you have benefitted from specialist support for literacy and mathematics brokered by the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector