

PROTECT-INSPECTION

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Mrs Rosalind Welch
Headteacher
Bocking Church Street Primary School
Church Street
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Braintree
CM7 5LA

Dear Mrs Welch

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bocking Church Street Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 on 14 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings to discuss the action taken since the last inspection were held with you and other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan and the school's lesson observation records were evaluated. Brief visits were made to several classrooms to see pupils at work. The school provided its latest assessment summaries for each year group.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body have been appointed. A new teacher has been appointed to begin in September.

Main findings

Since the inspection, the school has increased the frequency of its checks on pupils' progress. Regular meetings are held in which senior leaders discuss with each class teacher the progress of the pupils that they teach. These identify pupils who need additional support or challenge over the next few weeks. The progress data is now analysed to evaluate the progress of each year-group in reading, writing and mathematics, and to check the performance of different groups of pupils, such as those eligible for free school meals. The latest data shows that standards are above average in nearly all year groups. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 are on course for better results than those achieved in 2012. Progress over the year to date is good throughout Key Stage 2, except in Year 5, where it is good in literacy but weaker in mathematics. This weakness is currently being addressed.

Senior and middle leaders are active on several fronts. They have provided relevant staff training. The literacy and mathematics coordinators have visited lessons and examined pupils' books to check on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. Lessons are regularly observed and feedback is provided to the teachers concerned about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching. However, the observation and work scrutiny records do not exemplify or explain clearly enough which aspects of teaching have the most benefit on pupils' learning.

Senior leaders have also established a 'lesson study' programme, which is encouraging the sharing of good practice and deeper reflection by teachers on their own and each other's work. Five teachers have attended training at a local school to strengthen their practice. However, the challenge for school leaders is to make sure that the planned changes have the intended impact on pupils' progress.

The school action plan is well structured and makes clear who is responsible for leading each aspect. There are clear timelines and broad targets for pupils' attainment, but the targets are unhelpfully expressed in a different format to the regular assessment summaries. The action points are all appropriate and related to the recommended areas for improvement. However, some describe a planned change of practice without indicating how this will help pupils to make better progress, or whether additional training will be needed. Several of the changes are still in an early stage of implementation.

There are plans to make links with other schools and to establish partnerships with experienced and successful school leaders. However, some of these are quite recent and need to be confirmed. The governing body is revising its committee structures and sharpening its scrutiny of the school, following the recent review of governance and training programme. Each aspect of the improvement plan is being monitored by a named governor to increase the governing body's direct knowledge of the school's work.

Senior leaders and governors are beginning to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- set specific targets for each year-group specifying the attainment levels expected by the end of each Key Stage for progress to be considered good
- break these targets down to provide milestones for good progress each term
- demonstrate the impact of the various improvement strategies on the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress
- speed up progress in mathematics in Year 5
- enrol on one of the Better English and Mathematics conferences being run by Ofsted
- ensure that teachers receive enough detail in their feedback from lesson observations and work scrutiny to pinpoint how to improve their teaching in specific subjects
- confirm the partnership work that is currently being proposed to ensure that the headteacher has access to advice, guidance and an external perspective of the school.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. The school has agreed to provide regular updates on pupils' progress.

External support

The local authority is monitoring the school closely and plans to conduct a review in September. It is brokering support from a local leader of education. The education adviser plays an important role in supporting and validating the work of the leadership team. The school has also commissioned a consultant to support senior leaders over the next year in improving their evaluation skills. The school contributes to and benefits from its work in the local partnership, which includes a well-regarded teaching school. Plans are in place to make links with two other successful schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott
Her Majesty's Inspector