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Kate Clifford
Headteacher
Southwold Primary School and Early Years' Centre
Kennington Road
Radford
Nottingham
NG8 1QD

Dear Mrs Clifford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Southwold Primary School and Early Years' Centre

Following my visit to your school on 28 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 in March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body. We conducted a tour of the school with the deputy headteacher. You presented your monitoring of teaching and learning as well as data relating to the progress and attainment of pupils. I considered your data on the attendance and punctuality of pupils. I evaluated your school improvement plan.

Context

You returned to the school in May 2013 following maternity leave. One teacher left the school in March 2013. Due to a rising roll, the governing body have appointed two new teachers who will take up their posts in September 2013.

Main findings

Since the inspection, you and other leaders are quickly addressing the areas identified for improvement.

You have put in place a system which is enabling leaders to track closely the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. You are using this information to set challenging targets in order to address the prior underachievement of pupils. Teachers are making better use of these targets and current assessment information to plan work which is matched to the needs of all groups of pupils. As a result of these changes, there are marked improvements in the rates of progress which pupils are making in English and mathematics in each year group.

Leaders of key stages and subjects are improving teaching through implementing actions detailed in your school development plan. For example, following training delivered by key stage leaders, teachers are now challenging pupils to provide more detailed explanations in response to questions. Leaders are checking more rigorously the quality of teaching. However, they are limited in the extent to which they can hold teachers to account, as measures for success in your school development plan are not specifically linked to the progress and attainment of pupils.

Parents have responded positively to the workshops which you have delivered showing them how to support their children's learning in reading, and about letters and the sounds they make (phonics).

You have successfully implemented a range of measures which have improved rates of attendance. However, the punctuality of pupils has not improved and parents and carers are not challenged sufficiently about lateness and taking their children home before the end of the school day.

Governors have increased their scrutiny of the school's performance through setting up a new committee which focuses upon standards. This is helping them to check more carefully the progress which pupils are making, strengthening their position to make strategic decisions. For example, they have re-organised the arrangements for the teaching of older pupils. This has resulted in pupils in Year 5 making accelerated progress in order to reach the standards expected of their age.

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

- adapt the school development plan so that criteria for success are specific and linked to the progress and attainment of pupils
- improve punctuality and reduce the amount of times where pupils are taken out of school before the end of the day

- accelerate further the progress of the current Year 5 cohort in order to address prior underachievement.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school improvement officer deployed by the local authority has provided good levels of support to the school. Teachers in Key Stage 2 have benefitted from coaching to develop their skills to assess and support pupils during lessons. Support provided from other schools has enabled adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage to improve the tracking of the progress of groups of children. This has helped adults to provide activities which more precisely meet the needs of children. Governors have been supported by the local authority to implement more robust procedures for recruiting staff to the school.

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

Yours sincerely

David Carter
Her Majesty's Inspector