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Sandra Humphreys
Headteacher
Bacton Primary School
Walcott Road
Bacton
Norwich
NR12 0EY

Dear Mrs Humphreys

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bacton Primary School

Following my visit to your school with Paul Tomkow HMI on 19 September 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 us 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- sharpen up the improvement plans by setting more measurable targets, timescales and milestones, including targets for pupils' attainment and progress in all year-groups
- make sure that teachers can meet with and observe successful colleagues teaching similar mixed-age groups in other small schools
- arrange to visit schools that are particularly successful in teaching pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and schools that teach their most able pupils well
- create a fixed calendar for lesson observations and work scrutiny
- ensure that observers always evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and the progress of different ability groups when feeding back to teachers following lesson observations

- improve the impact of work scrutiny and informal lesson observations by maintaining a note-book to summarise issues as they arise and using the notes to inform future improvement planning
- report the average attainment and progress of cohorts and groups of pupils to governors in a standard format after each assessment cycle, so they can formulate challenging questions

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the teachers, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the inspection. We evaluated your school improvement plan and the action plan you developed following the inspection. Brief visits were made to several classrooms to see pupils at work. During the course of the day we also looked at the school's new tracking system and reviewed information that had resulted from recent lesson observations.

Context

The school's status has recently changed from a First school to a Primary school. A long serving member of the teaching staff resigned her post at the end of the summer term and the school appointed a newly qualified teacher. Both you and chair of governors have attended a 'Getting to Good' seminar.

Main findings

The small size of the school brings advantages and disadvantages. One of the disadvantages is that teachers have few potential role-models within the school, for example to strengthen the teaching of pupils in Reception or for stretching the most able pupils.

You have devised and begun to implement an action plan that includes targets for improvement, success criteria and timescales. However, the success criteria do not make enough reference to pupil attainment and progress across the school.

Pupils' attainment and progress are now recorded on an electronic database, which helps to pinpoint which pupils may need extra support. This development has helped you to get a better overview of pupils' performance across the school. However, governors do not receive enough information about the attainment and progress cohorts and groups of pupils currently in the school.

You have recently observed teaching across the school and you plan to complete a cycle of monitoring activities for the year ahead, which will include classroom observation, work scrutiny and analysis of performance data. Resources have been earmarked for this purpose but the dates for this activity are at present too fluid.

Recent improvements to the way in which the school teaches phonics has led to an increase in the percentage of children achieving the required level in the Year 1 phonics check. Improved access to portable computers and new teaching approaches are helping to improve writing.

The governing body is highly committed to ensuring that the school becomes good at the next inspection. Following the inspection the governing body arranged a review of governance. This process has helped governors to develop a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to become a good school. The governing body continues to be supportive of the school, but governors now feel better placed to provide ask challenging questions, particularly around pupil performance.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. You have agreed to supply updates on pupils' attainment during this period and to provide copies of your headteacher's reports to the governing body.

External support

During this inspection, plans have been made for the school to be linked with an outstanding small school in a neighbouring authority, which is led by a Local Leader in Education. The local authority has not been actively involved in the school since the inspection but will be offering the school a place on its programme of support for schools requiring improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott
Her Majesty's Inspector