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18 September 2013

Jill Davis
Executive Headteacher
Walpole Highway Primary School
School Road
Walpole Highway
Wisbech
PE14 7QQ

Dear Ms Davis

Special measures monitoring inspection of Walpole Highway Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Following the previous inspection, the headteacher left the school and you have been appointed as executive headteacher. You are currently leading Walpole Highway and the two other schools in The Three School Federation. One higher-level teaching assistant and a teaching assistant have also been appointed. The school is planning to become a sponsored academy later this school year.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You have acted promptly to address the points for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have ensured that the school now tracks pupils' progress closely and so quickly identifies underachievement. Crucially, with the assistant headteacher, you are keeping a close eye on the quality of teaching, through lesson observations and checking work in pupils' books. New marking and presentation policies are having a positive impact on the quality of recorded work. You have also acted to deploy teaching assistants more effectively and have suitable plans in place to increase their effectiveness when supporting learning. A particular success is that teaching and non-teaching staff welcome the changes and challenge you have introduced and the whole staff team shows a strong commitment to improving pupils' achievement.

Your school's post-inspection plan clearly indicates the actions that will be taken to improve the school's effectiveness. The plan covers all of the necessary areas for improvement, although it is not always clear exactly who is responsible for each action and who will evaluate its impact.

An external review of the governing body is helping to identify the aspects of governance where training and support are required. You are providing governors with accurate information about pupils' progress and achievement. However, the governing body continues to have three vacancies and not all governors are demonstrating the commitment required to lead the school out of special measures as quickly as possible. Just the Chair of the Governing Body was able to meet with me. Similarly, apart from the Chair, other governors rarely visit the school between formal meetings. Governors are not contributing sufficiently to school improvement planning.

The local authority has established an improvement board to provide support and to monitor and evaluate the school's progress. It also produced a statement of action following the previous inspection. However, the statement is not always factually accurate and includes typing errors, which mean that the dates for starting and completing improvement activities are confusing. The statement does not explain the factors considered leading to the decision to keep the school open. A further weakness is that the many targets for improvement in the statement are imprecise and so not easily measurable. Finally, the statement identifies a range of support the local authority will secure to help the school. However, the local authority has not yet met any of these commitments.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is not fit for purpose

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector