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James McBurney
William Marshall Church of England Primary School
Main Street
Welney
PE14 9RB

Dear Mr McBurney

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to William Marshall Church of England Primary School, Welney

Following my visit to your school on 2 October 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- improve marking and other feedback to pupils on what they need to do to improve so there is a greater focus on learning aims in addition to those related to personal development
- add targets relating to the proportions of pupils exceeding expected progress to action plans
- instigate an external review of governance.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the assistant headteacher, the school council, the Governing Body, two teaching assistants and a parent. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. These discussions all focussed on the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan. I observed two lessons. I also scrutinised documents relating

to pupils' progress and other evidence of the impact of actions you and the other leaders in the school have taken to address the areas for improvement identified by the last inspection.

Context

There have been no significant changes in context since the last inspection.

Main findings

You have acted quickly to deal with inappropriate behaviour. Pupils are very positive about the procedures that they have helped to formulate to ensure their learning is not disrupted. They also understand the way they learn best and are increasingly confident about making decisions about their own learning. Their increased enjoyment means they attend more regularly.

All pupils benefit from lessons that are well planned and adjusted to meet different needs. Teachers use the mixed age classes well to allow pupils to move to work that is more difficult as soon as they are ready. However, sometimes teachers miss opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding or extend their curiosity with skilful questions.

Teachers help pupils to understand what they must do to improve through the learning journals the school has recently introduced. However, the targets focus more often on personal development than academic progress. Marking does not consistently provide the pupils with their next steps or encourage them to reflect on comments teachers have made.

Leaders have provided good opportunities for professional development for staff. These include developing areas of interest and expertise. You have made good use of government funding to expand the range of sporting activities available and increase the specialist support, with opportunities for pupils to engage in competitive sport with other similar small schools.

You have continued to develop and embed strategies to help parents to support their children's learning. The reading and learning cafés are well attended and receive positive feedback.

The action plan is fit for purpose, but it should include reference to the proportions of pupils exceeding as well as making expected progress. In addition, the list of people who will monitor and evaluate progress on each action point should specify which governor will support the process and the protocols for their work.

Governors have improved the way they report on their regular visits to see at first hand the work of the school. They have not formally evaluated their work and they would benefit from support with this task through an external review.

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 benefits from the informal partnership with a successful school and your leadership of both schools allows good sharing of ideas and expertise. The local authority has invited the school to join the 'Norfolk good to great' group of schools in order to increase opportunities for networking. In order to meet the challenges that revisions to the National Curriculum will bring, the school should consider how it might work in a more formal collaboration with one or more other schools so that subject expertise might be shared.

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

Yours sincerely

Elaine Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector