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8 October 2013

Mary Blackie  
Headteacher  
Sutton CofE VC Infant School  
Denise Close  
Off Laxfield Road  
Sutton  
Norfolk  
NR12 9QP

Dear Mrs Blackie

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sutton CofE VC Infant School**

Following my visit to your school on 7 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 8 May 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:

- Ensure that governor's notes of meetings and their challenges are recorded in such a way that timescales and targets for actions are clear, and progress towards them can be easily monitored.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, representatives of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated

together with details of the school's lesson observations and assessment of pupils' progress. Visits were made to all three classes to evaluate learning.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection the school has formed a federation with two other schools, Catfield Church of England primary and Hickling Church of England infant school. Both are close by. You now manage all three schools, aided by senior teachers in each. The federation has a single governing body.

## **Main findings**

Provisional results for Key Stage 1 teachers' assessments demonstrate clear trends of pupil improvement. In the last 12 months the progress that pupils make in all year groups, including the reception class, has accelerated. In reading and mathematics, the school can demonstrate that all pupils are making progress that is at least as good as that expected. These improvements have been most marked in reading and are associated with the effective use of teaching to read by matching sounds to letters. Writing is improving, but not as fast. At the end of Year 2, the standards reached by pupils are now about a term ahead of national expectations for their age.

Some year groups are very small, often single-figures, and this has produced erratic school performance data in the past. This means that there are no clear differences between the progress made by boys and girls, or by those for whom the school received addition funding through the pupil premium and their peers. Overall trends of improvement are clear however.

The school has, rightly, prioritised the improvement of teaching since the last inspection. Staff have undertaken professional development that has been closely linked to subject specialisms, and on marking and presentation. As a consequence the marking of written work has improved and pupils now have a greater pride in the presentation of their books. The impact of the federation has been to enable the sharing of good practice, for example in subject planning and the checking of assessment. In class, pupils work well on tasks they are given. They are generally attentive and are keen to learn.

Your leadership is of a high standard. You have an accurate view of the challenges that the federation faces. Self-assessment and action plans are excellent, with clear targets for improvement. Importantly, a single improvement plan covers all sites of the federation. The school's evaluation of its own teaching and learning is very good, with a good emphasis on the learning taking place.

The governance of the federation is strong. Governors bring many relevant skills to their role, for example in financial management. Some visit the school regularly, taking a close interest in its work. They challenge the headteacher effectively and

ask the right questions because they understand aspects of school performance. Records of their meetings are comprehensive. However when challenges are made they are rarely recorded in a way that gives targets or deadlines for action. This means that it is difficult for the school and governors to monitor whether actions have been completed.

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 local authority has provided effective support to the school, especially during its transition to a federation. It has provided expertise to a school improvement group and specialist training, for example in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**