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Andrew Emms
Headteacher
Bacton Community Primary School
Taylors Green
Bacton
Suffolk
IP14 4LL

Dear Mr Emms

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bacton Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- make sure that the governing body provides the strategic direction, challenge and support needed to improve the school's work
- make sure that the action plan provides a clear direction for the work of all senior leaders and governors so that all know precisely how to play a full part in the school's improvement.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the literacy leader, two governors and the primary performance adviser from the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. I met the school council and spoke to some parents when they brought

their children to school. I toured the classrooms with you and we looked at pupils' books together

Context

There is no Chair or Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. The current Year 4 will be the first group to move through to the end of Key Stage 2 as the school extends its provision from a first school to a primary school.

Main findings

The governing body is not in a position to provide sufficient strategic overview or challenge to senior leaders. There are vacancies for the Chair and Vice-Chair, and the necessary checks of the school's work have not taken place since the inspection. You are frustrated by the lack of challenge from the governing body and governors rely on you too much. This is preventing you from getting on with some of the work that needs to be done. As a result, although you know what you want to happen, too many actions are yet to get underway. Added to this, the action plan relies too much on your input, with little responsibility delegated to the deputy headteacher and literacy leader. This not only slows the pace of change but also reduces your role in evaluating the work of senior leaders. Measurements for success through the action plan are not precise enough to support staff and governors in checking the effectiveness of the actions taken. Senior staff do not have enough time set aside for them to play a full part in school improvement.

Teachers have made some important changes in the classrooms, and these are making a difference to pupils' achievements. By providing them with more opportunities to apply what they have learned, pupils complete work at a higher standard and benefit from teachers' feedback on what they have achieved. The school council are very knowledgeable about what it means to learn well and about what teachers do to make sure that this happens. By refocusing staff meetings on teaching and pupils' learning, teachers are better informed about what will accelerate pupils' progress. Re-establishing your meetings with teaching assistants is helping them to reflect on the part that they play in pupils' learning. However, no formal checks have taken place on the quality of teaching, and this means that staff have not had the benefit of knowing how well they are doing or what to improve next.

Parents that spoke to me, and others who gave written feedback at the recent open evening, say that they are happy with the communication about their children's progress and what they are learning. They like the weekly newsletters that started at the beginning of this term. However, they do not feel well informed about the strategic work of the school. For example, they do not know what staff are working on following the inspection report and they want to know more about arrangements for when the school has pupils in Years 5 and 6.

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's primary performance adviser is new to the school this term and is getting to know the support that is needed. Although there is a range of courses available from local authority advisers, the governing body and subject leaders need more specific support at this time and this has not happened yet. An adviser completed a review of the governing body's checks on the school's work recently. But this took place without speaking to governors and was based on written records of meetings, rather than on the effectiveness of their work.

I am copying this letter to the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk local authority.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector