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17 October, 2013

Mrs J. Claxton
Headteacher
Grovelands Community Primary School
Dunbar Drive
Hailsham
BN27 3UW

Dear Mrs Claxton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Grovelands Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 July 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:

- whole-school and subject action plans set out clearly who will oversee the day-to-day implementation of planned actions and who will evaluate their impact
- the effectiveness of actions taken to increase the proportion of good or better teaching is closely monitored and that steps are taken promptly to eliminate teaching that does not engage pupils' interest and lead to good or better progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings to discuss the action taken since the last inspection were held with you and other senior leaders, with the Chair of the Governing Body and a member of the governors' Curriculum and Standards Committee, and with a representative of the local authority. I reviewed the whole-school action plan, the

action plans for literacy and mathematics and the minutes of governors' meetings since the last inspection. I looked at information about pupils' standards and progress this term and at the whole-school curriculum plan. With you, I walked round the school, looked briefly into most classes and talked to pupils about their work.

Context

Changes since the section 5 inspection include: changes to the committee structure of the governing body; revision of policies to establish consistency of good practice in teaching and learning; the appointment of two new teachers to replace two who left at the end of the school year; and employment of additional staff to provide one-to-one tuition and small-group teaching for pupils eligible for additional support under the government's pupil premium scheme.

Main findings

The school action plan presents a well-defined 'strategic intent' for each issue raised at the last inspection and these together present an ambitious vision for the school's development. Each strategic intent is supported by a schedule of practical initiatives, such as the introduction of regular meetings to review pupils' progress. While not involved in drawing up the school action plan, governors reviewed it before it was published and they support the strategic vision it presents. Whole-school priorities are carried through into subject-based action plans, which deal in useful detail with steps to be taken, for example, to help teachers develop the literacy skills needed to raise standards across the curriculum, including the systematic teaching of phonics. When those leading initiatives also have responsibility for assessing how effective they have been, it is hard for such judgements to be sufficiently objective and challenging.

You have established a strong team of senior leaders who have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and a persuasively communicated commitment to making the school action plan work in practice. Planning and the assessment of work are now done more collaboratively, with senior leaders overseeing the process within their designated year groups. Drawing on your accurate assessment of teaching across the school, you have redeployed staff so as to play more directly to their strengths. It is too early to judge the full impact of these changes but your monitoring of teaching and learning suggests that, while some unevenness remains, the proportion of good or better teaching is increasing. The section 5 inspection findings underlined your concerns about the quality of writing across all key stages. Work currently selected for display around the school presents an encouraging variety of tasks. It shows extended and lively writing, which suggests rising expectations amongst teachers and their pupils. Opportunities to explore ideas and develop skills in a creative way are being successfully extended through your employment of dance, music and sports specialists to work with pupils during their teachers' preparation and planning time. Pupils' evocation of the Great Fire of London through dance was an excellent example of the enjoyment and the challenge such activities generate.

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 is providing constructive support through its monitoring of the school's progress on issues highlighted at the last inspection. This includes a review of strengths and areas for development in the governors' role - for example, as critical friends able to evaluate the impact of leadership and teaching on pupils' learning. The authority is supporting curriculum development across all years, with a recent focus on speaking and listening, reading and writing in Year 6. The senior leadership team has benefited from coaching provided by external consultancy. Your teachers and teaching assistants share useful professional training with other members of the local cluster of schools and the Hailsham Trust.

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

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector