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Mrs S Gallichan, Acting Headteacher  
Fakenham Infants School  
Norwich Road  
Fakenham  
Norfolk  
NR21 8HN

Dear Mrs Gallichan

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Fakenham Infants School**

Following my visit to your school on 21 November 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in June 2013. The school should take immediate action to:

- use lesson observations more effectively to evaluate teachers' impact on what pupils know, understand and can do
- use current progress data to evaluate the extent to which rates of progress have improved for different pupil groups, since the inspection
- give teachers more specific targets following lesson observations, learning walks, work scrutiny and data analysis
- pursue, as part of performance management, the success with which staff share their strengths and tackle weaker aspects of their work
- make high standards in all subjects explicit, challenging subject leaders to demonstrate pupils' progression.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, senior and middle leaders, the acting Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school action plan, reviewed monitoring records, scrutinised a sample of pupils' work and teachers' marking, and visited classes to see pupils and staff at work.

## **Context**

Since the inspection, a newly qualified teacher has joined the school following an increase in school numbers. Since the end of September, the headteacher has been absent due to illness. The deputy headteacher has stepped up to the role of acting headteacher. The Vice-Chair of Governors has taken the chair following the resignation of the previous incumbent. Three new governors have been appointed.

## **Main findings**

In the absence of the headteacher, you and other senior leaders are maintaining stability and are starting to address the issues that required improvement at the last inspection. However, although your work has established the foundation for improvement it is not having enough impact on improving teaching and raising standards.

There is not enough evidence that rates of progress have been sustained or improved since the start of term. For example, although you have identified which pupils should receive intervention it is not clear if particular groups, for example pupils supported by pupil premium, are catching up at a faster rate than in the previous year. However, you are using progress data analytically, which in 2012-13 showed a marked improvement on the previous year overall.

Similarly, it is not clear if new approaches to marking are having enough impact on pupils' work. Staff are giving pupils more written feedback about what they do well and what needs improving. However, the quality of marking is not consistently good. It does not focus enough on pupils' gaps in knowledge, understanding or skills. Not all staff are providing examples, to help pupils understand what is expected. Some staff are moving pupils on to the next piece of work before pupils' response to feedback and marking has been checked. Consequently, although staff are spending more time on marking it is not improving pupils' work sufficiently. The clearer learning objectives that you are successfully refining with staff, provides a good basis for better marking.

Your introduction of 'what a good one looks like' walls is a good step towards classrooms that promote high standards. There are pockets of inspiring displays around the school, both in public areas and in classrooms. However, the balance between teachers' stimulus materials and pupils' work is uneven between classes which indicate that inconsistencies have not been addressed. Expectations in different subjects are not always made clear, for example by annotating displays or

using pupils' work to illustrate progression. This represents a missed opportunity to add to the success of lessons that parents and carers join, to learn how they can help their child do well.

Since the previous inspection, you have:

- written an action plan that is aligned to the key issues for improvement
- introduced new codes and procedures for marking pupils' work
- developed a new approach to planning lessons and lesson objectives
- observed classes at work, including some formal observations of teaching
- analysed the attainment and progress of groups of pupils
- arranged opportunities for parents to learn about new approaches taken
- audited staff to find out their areas of confidence and training needs in relation to National Curriculum subjects.

This work provides a secure basis for improvement.

The review of governance has been recently completed although it was too early at the time of the visit to evaluate the impact.

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 has received additional support from the local authority following the substantive headteacher's absence. Some revisions to the action plan have been made following feedback from the local authority. However, although planned, not enough support with lesson monitoring and evaluation has taken place, particularly where inadequacies in teaching were identified at the last inspection. The Junior School is working collaboratively with the school to help address any issues of common concern. Some staff have also visited local schools that have a good track record.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**