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11 December 2013

Mrs Louise Spall
Headteacher
Somerleyton Primary School
The Green
Somerleyton
Lowestoft
NR32 5PT

Dear Mrs Spall

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Somerleyton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 December 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 September 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:

- Tackle gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, especially at Key Stage 1, so that pupils are able to move on to new more challenging work quickly.
- Ensure that all pupils are given opportunities to develop good skills of independent learning.
- Ensure that governors' meetings are recorded in such a way that the school's progress towards targets is easily checked.

Evidence

During the visit meetings were held with you and members of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was had with a representative from the local authority. Actions taken to improve the school since the last inspection were discussed, and

various school improvement documents scrutinised. Together we visited all three school classes to evaluate learning.

Context

You, the Key Stage 1 teacher, and year 5/6 teacher were all new in post at the time of the last inspection.

Main findings

The last inspection identified that not enough pupils reached the standards that they were capable of reaching, and many made insufficiently rapid progress. Since then the results of the 2013 national tests have become available. These confirmed that too few pupils reached high enough levels at Key Stage 1, but also that improvements have begun at Key Stage 2. Here, the progress made by pupils is now close to the national average in all subjects. Many more pupils reached or exceeded the standards expected of them.

The school now has accurate assessment systems. This means that teachers have clear indications of how well individual pupils are doing, and you can monitor how well groups of pupils are progressing. This information is used well to help teachers identify where the gaps are in pupils' knowledge and understanding, and to teach accordingly.

In class, new teachers are finding that their work is complicated by having to attend to the gaps in knowledge and understanding that pupils have. These gaps are most pronounced at Key Stage 1, where pupils have not been prepared well for the next Key Stage. Teachers and pupils are making up ground quickly however. The school's own data indicate that, across all year groups, pupils are making progress that is at least in line with national averages and sometimes faster. Progress accelerates in Years 5 and 6.

You recognise, as do teachers, that once the gaps in their knowledge and understanding are filled, pupils can be challenged much more. In lessons, pupils have been slow to develop the skills of independent learning and problem solving. Many are not yet confident learners.

You have a good understanding of where the strengths and weaknesses of the school lie, and you have communicated this understanding to staff and governors well. Your management of their performance is driven by the targets that you have set and teachers are increasingly accountable for the success of their pupils. Your lesson observations are accurate though sometimes place too much emphasis on what teachers are doing rather than what pupils are learning.

The review of governance recommended at the last inspection has been undertaken. It confirms the weaknesses identified in the last inspection, and governors recognise

the areas that they need to improve. This has started, for example training has been undertaken on the evaluation of school performance data. Governors represent the school within the local community well. They have begun to challenge the school and you more, but this is not always recorded well in the records of meetings so it is difficult for them to monitor the effects that these challenges have.

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 benefitted from general school improvement advice from the local authority, and from mentoring by the headteacher of a local 'good' school.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector