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21 March 2014

Mrs Jade Betts
Acting Headteacher
Thomas Eaton County Primary School
Church Street
Wimblington
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 0QS

Dear Mrs Betts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thomas Eaton County Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 November 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 weaknesses in the teaching of phonics
- improve the quality of teaching in classes where it is not yet good.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school action plans and the school's monitoring and assessment documentation. You accompanied me during visits to lessons, where we observed teaching and looked at pupils' work.

Context

The head teacher has been absent from the school since the beginning of the spring term 2014. Since then, you have been the acting head teacher.

Main findings

Your plans to improve teaching are having a positive impact in most classrooms. Pupils are making better progress now in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.

Your evaluation of teaching is accurate, and you have quickly developed a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve things. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are rising in most classes and this means that more-able pupils are given work that extends their learning. During my visit I saw this during a mathematics lesson where the teacher provided pupils of different abilities with very different problems to solve. As a result, all pupils succeeded in their learning.

Your work is having a positive impact on the quality of marking. You have tackled the inconsistencies identified at the recent inspection and all pupils are now receiving regular feedback about their work. Some of the feedback is of a very high quality. There is, however, more to do in this area, as simple errors such as capital letters in the middle of sentences or misspelt words go uncorrected in some pupils' writing. The teaching of phonics is not improving at the same pace as in other areas. Too many pupils in Year 1 are not on track to meet the expected standard this year. Not all teachers and teaching assistants have enough confidence in the teaching of phonics and this is leading to under-achievement.

You are making good use of external support. A valuable link with an outstanding school is providing teachers with access to very good practice. Your action plan is targeting the right areas for improvement, but needs more emphasis on developing the teaching of phonics. Governors are providing challenge and support, based on a clear understanding of the priorities and are now more actively monitoring the impact of the work that you and other senior leaders are doing.

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 an appropriate level of support for your leadership and the improvement of teaching. It is funding an external consultant to support you, in addition to one of its own advisors. Another advisor is working specifically on developing the teaching of mathematics. A senior advisor is overseeing the work of this team, although it is too early to see the impact of their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Moodie
Her Majesty's Inspector