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

Dear Mrs Gallichan

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Fakenham Infants School

Following my visit to your school on 3 April 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.

The visit was the second 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement following the section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- consolidate your good approach to teaching pupils how to revisit and refine their work, in order to reach higher standards still
- increase opportunities for staff to observe subject leaders teaching the subject they lead
- provide continuity in the leadership and management of teaching, by tracking the impact of feedback and training over time
- work with the Junior School to develop a shared vision for pupils' development as they progress between Year 2 and Year 3.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the acting deputy headteacher, two governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school action plan, reviewed monitoring records, and visited classes to see pupils and staff at work.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit, the substantive headteacher has remained on sick leave. A new Chair of the Governing Body has started.

Main findings

Since the first monitoring visit, you have:

- increased the frequency and rigour of lesson observations and work scrutiny, giving particular attention to teaching that is not consistently good
- monitored the current progress of pupils more analytically, focusing on different groups more effectively when evaluating the quality of teaching
- improved the learning environment of the school, including the library area, corridor and classroom displays of pupils' work
- raised expectations of subjects leaders, to plan, manage and evaluate pupils' progression in response to a shared topic about the winter Olympics.

The quality of teaching is improving because staff are getting better feedback. You are using a wider range of evidence to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Teachers' planning and marking, lesson observations and learning walks, pupils' views and work, now contribute to pupil progress meetings with staff. You are analysing pupil progress data to ensure that individuals and groups of pupils receive an appropriate level of support and challenge. At this stage in the school year pupils are making better progress than in previous years, particularly in writing and mathematics. You are promoting improvements in reading, for example by creating a more stimulating library area and by involving parents and carers.

Pupils are clearer about how to improve their work. More detailed feedback and marking is helping pupils to look back at their work, correct mistakes, try different approaches or finish off ideas. This builds on the good practice seen early on where pupils learn how to persevere in order to achieve higher standards. For example, in Reception pupils pursue the creative potential of ideas and materials by working into their art work, mixing media together as their imagination and repertoire of skills grows. This approach is starting to improve the quality and range of pupils' writing, and the accuracy and application of their mathematics as they progress through the school.

In English and mathematics staff are making their expectations of different groups of pupils more explicit. The best teaching clearly links lesson objectives, displays showing features of 'what a good one looks like', and assessment criteria together. In other subjects this approach is at an early stage. There are not enough

opportunities for staff to observe subject leaders teach to see how successful approaches used in English and mathematics might be adapted. However, subject displays of Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 work together are helping subject leaders evaluate pupils' progression and adjust the curriculum accordingly. Subject audits are also proving helpful in meeting the professional development needs of staff.

The Governing Body is acting on the recommendations of an external review of governance. Governors are making sure that senior leaders are appropriately supported and challenged, informed by more first-hand evidence such as that gained through their involvement in 'monitoring weeks', learning walks, data analysis and their attachment to different year groups. The governing body has introduced a well-being programme for staff in order to strengthen further the links between governors, teaching and support staff. Governors report positive links with parents and carers but plan to engage the wider community more actively in the school.

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 has continued to support the acting headteacher during the substantive headteacher's absence. Two visits since the first monitoring inspection have focused on performance management and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching. In addition, a mathematics networking group facilitated by the local authority is having a positive impact on the school's improvement.

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