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2 May 2014

Mrs Clare Fletcher
Executive Headteacher
North Walsham Junior School
Manor Road
North Walsham
NR28 9HG

Dear Mrs Fletcher

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to North Walsham Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 1 May 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 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 last section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- develop the role of middle managers in monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching and learning.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders. I met with four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I also spoke on the phone to the Chair of Governors, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated along with other documentation, including the outcomes of recent monitoring activities. I accompanied you on a brief visit to all classes, looked at pupils' books and spoke to pupils about their work.

Context

Two new teachers were appointed in September 2013.

Main findings

Along with other senior leaders, you have developed comprehensive and effective systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. School leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning, through a well-planned cycle which includes lesson observations, work scrutiny and data analysis. You have recently begun to involve middle leaders in the monitoring of foundation subjects and have plans for them to play a more active role in the school's improvement.

As a result of the improved systems that you have introduced, you have made significant progress in making the changes that were necessary to address underperformance and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school's leadership team now shares a clear understanding of what is working well and what more needs to be done in order for the school to be judged as good at its next inspection.

The focus you have placed on professional development has helped in the elimination of inadequate teaching and is leading to more teaching being judged as good or better. Each teacher has had the opportunity to visit other schools to observe teaching. Teachers have also been involved in a coaching programme with colleagues from the infant school which is part of the federation.

The school now tracks pupil progress accurately. Pupils' progress and attainment is reviewed formally on a half-termly basis and relevant information is shared with pupils and parents. The improved use of assessment is helping the school to intervene early when pupils are falling behind and provide additional targeted support. The school is also beginning to make good use of targets to improve rates of progress. Pupils receive good feedback about their work and how to improve, particularly in literacy and mathematics lessons. As a result, achievement is improving and an increasing number of pupils are making better than expected progress.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know how to hold the school to account for the academic performance of its pupils. Governors appreciate the high quality reports provided by the headteacher.

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 commissions support for curriculum and professional development from a range of external agencies. These arrangements have contributed to the recent improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Having supported the governing body in the appointment of the executive headteacher, the local authority is confident in her ability to make the necessary improvements and now provides 'light touch' support to the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector