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22 February 2013

Chrissy Barclay
The Weatheralls Primary School
Pratt Street
Soham
CB7 5BH

Dear Mrs Barclay

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to The Weatheralls Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 12 December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the two assistant headteachers, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The lead inspector conducted a tour of the classrooms with school leaders.

Context

There have been no changes in the context of the school since the inspection in December 2012.

Main findings

The school's detailed improvement plans address the key priorities and include appropriate actions to address weaknesses. Most of the targets for improvement are appropriately challenging. However the writing attainment targets for the current Year 6 pupils is not high enough to ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points.

With the support of the local authority leaders have introduced more rigorous monitoring procedures which include more regular lesson observations, reviews of progress data and analysis of the progress in pupils' books. This approach is very helpful in providing an accurate picture of the quality of teaching over time. Following lesson observations teachers receive helpful feedback and targets for improvement which are quickly followed-up with a subsequent visit to ensure matters improve quickly. However where teaching requires improvement there is a lack of systematic planning to provide support and training to or to set clear expectations and tight deadlines for improvement.

The progress and attainment of pupils is tracked carefully. Leaders are planning to periodically check the accuracy of teachers' assessments more rigorously to ensure that progress data are fully reliable. Regular meetings are held to identify pupils who are in danger of falling behind and some strategies for improvement are identified, for instance some teachers have introduced a focus writing group for boys. There is not enough analysis however of the barriers to better progress or strategies to overcome them, for instance where poor attendance is an issue

Governors know the school well and are ambitious for its improvement. They visit the school regularly including to attend monitoring visits from the local authority representative. Members of the governing body ask pertinent questions but do not always receive the full information they need to track the school's progress and challenge leaders appropriately. Governors understand the need to become more proactive in asking for the information they need in a form they can quickly interpret. They also understand the need to check progress and attainment data against national benchmarks and to monitor the impact of pupil premium funding on the progress of targeted pupils.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- implement clear support, monitoring and improvement plans for teaching that requires improvement
- consider further support for some of the pupils in Year 6 who have fallen behind to ensure they leave school with the necessary skills particularly in writing
- ensure that pupil progress meetings are consistently helpful in addressing slow progress or underachievement

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority is providing valuable support to improve leadership. The local authority representative visits the school fortnightly to conduct joint lesson observations, review progress data and analyse the progress in pupils' books. She is supporting leaders in maintaining the pace of improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector