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Joanne Davenport
Headteacher
South Wootton Infant School
9 Church Lane
South Wootton
King's Lynn
Norfolk
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Dear Ms Davenport

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to South Wootton Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 March 2014. 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:

- refine the action plan to make sure that success is easily measured against a range of criteria for good teaching and learning.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and leaders for literacy, mathematics and special educational needs. I met with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, and the school's adviser from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the previous inspection. The action plan was evaluated.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing or the governing body since the March inspection. The school has very recently joined the local authority's N2GG (Norfolk to Good and Great) programme.

Main findings

It remains the case that two of the six classes are taught by supply teachers or by you because of the long-term absence of two teachers. Nevertheless, this has not stopped you, the three leaders and the governing body taking the appropriate steps to address the points for improvement from the inspection. The Chair of the Governing Body quickly arranged for an external review of governance and this will take place next week. The action plan has already been reviewed to reflect the inspection findings. It sets out a suitable range of actions to take over the next academic year, with the intention of making sure that pupils make at least good progress from their starting points by the summer term in 2015. The plan states the broad aims for pupils' good progress and good teaching but lacks detailed descriptions for what to look for when monitoring progress towards these goals. The action plan sensibly supports the main priorities while supplementing the broader strategic improvement plan. Similarly, the action plan is supported by separate action plans for literacy, mathematics and special educational needs. An action plan for the Governing Body will follow the review of governance. The Chair of the Governing Body is discussing with you and governors about how to make the best use of governors' time in monitoring the action plan. Omissions on the school's website as identified in the inspection report have been resolved and a governor now takes responsibility for making sure that all is up-to-date.

Leaders for literacy, mathematics and special educational needs are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Despite pressures on their time because of staff absence, they remain very committed to improving their leadership skills and use the time that they have wisely. You have made sure that they have the time to go to meetings with colleagues in local schools and this helps them to maintain their strategic responsibilities and to reflect on their practice.

In response to the inspection report, and as we saw when we toured the classrooms, teachers have already given a lot of thought to enthusing pupils to write creatively. In addition, there are good displays of pupils' work and useful prompts to help pupils with their writing. To make sure that pupils, especially the boys, improve their writing systematically in Year 1, the timetable from September will include more frequent, well-planned opportunities to teach writing skills

In consultation with the local authority's leader, you have recently joined the N2GG programme. The first part of the support will take place later next week, focusing appropriately on enhancing the work of support staff.

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

Although you and the Chair of the Governing Body are generally happy with the advice from the local authority's human resources service, you are not getting the advice quickly enough to help you take the action that you need to resolve some of the current concerns. This must be addressed as a matter of urgency because these issues are taking up too much of your time and of others, and could slow the implementation of the action plan if not resolved in time for the next academic year.

You and other leaders are very positive about the professional support from local authority advisers at meetings in your local cluster of schools. However, the Chair of the Governing Body is quite rightly displeased that meetings for governors are sometimes cancelled at short notice because of a lack of participants.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector