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Miss Jane Hobley
Headteacher
Norfolk Community Primary School
Guildford Avenue
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S2 2PJ

Dear Miss Hobley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Norfolk Community Primary School, Sheffield

Following my visit to your school on 13 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 January 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:

- Tweak the school's action plan to make it clear who is responsible for carrying out checks on the quality of teachers' and pupils' work. Clarify the dates when those checks will be done and who will evaluate the success of the work.
- Further develop teachers' questioning skills by making sure they plan to ask the most able challenging questions.
- Make sure pupils understand why a mathematics strategy works as well as how to apply it.
- Continue to reduce pupils' reliance on adults in developing their reading and comprehension skills.
- Make sure visits by governors are sharply focused on areas identified by the school's action plan.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, and members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's action plan. I took two short tours of the school with you during which we made a series of brief lesson visits. I also looked at a sample of mathematics books and the school's progress data.

Main findings

Leaders and managers, including the governing body have taken timely and effective action to take the school on its journey to good. All the adults in the school are committed to seeing improvements happen quickly. An example of this is the work to improve pupils' attendance. This is showing pupils are attending school more regularly and staff have been successful in reducing the number of children who are persistently absent.

A new way of checking pupils' progress in different subjects has been introduced and this is being used well to identify individuals and groups of pupils who are at risk of under-achieving. Teachers are expected to use this information to plan how they will help pupils to catch up and how they can make sure the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently. On the whole this is going well and there are signs of improvement in pupils' work. This is especially strong in reading, where pupils are helping each other to understand what they are reading and develop the skills to read challenging texts by themselves. There is still work to do as pupils still rely on adults to prompt them but you and your team know this and have good plans to reduce the amount of support as pupils gain confidence.

The new approach to teaching mathematics described in the last full inspection report is gathering momentum. Teachers are becoming more skilled and confident. This is reflected in pupils' enjoyment of mathematics. However, there are times when pupils understand how to solve a problem without fully grasping why it works. Teachers are modelling effective ways of making sure pupils of all abilities are appropriately challenged. For example, pupils tackle additional questions or problems set by teachers when they have marked pupils work.

Teachers use lollipop sticks with pupils' names on them to select who will answer a question. This makes sure all pupils are listening and have a chance to contribute. However, questions are not always pitched at the right level. There is more work to be done to make sure teachers ask the hardest questions of the most able.

Governors have taken a long, hard look at their own work and taken effective steps to make sure they develop the right skills and systems to check on the quality of the school's work. They have put in place a different structure to help them focus their work. They visit the school regularly to check for themselves how things are going.

However, these visits are not always sharply focused on the school's action plan and do not always make best use of their time.

The school's action plan identifies the right areas to concentrate on and the actions it outlines are sensible. It clearly shows what success will look like. However, the arrangements for who will check what and when are not clear enough and this has the potential for planned actions to slip through the net. It also lacks clarity about who or which group will take responsibility for evaluating the success of different parts of the plan.

There is an air of optimism in the school and teachers, leaders, governors and all the staff are determined to make the required improvements.

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 offered the school effective support in arranging a valuable external review of the governing body. The impact has been this group have been revitalised and have a better understanding of their roles and responsibility in securing rapid improvement. Visits by the local authority representative are light touch. This is appropriate as leaders are making good use of other local schools to see examples of good practice and develop effective networks.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt

Her Majesty's Inspector