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Mrs Rachel Stroulger
Headteacher
Burnham Market Primary School
Friars Lane
Burnham Market
King's Lynn
PE31 8JA

Dear Mrs Stroulger

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Burnham Market Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 June 2014 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in November 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation. I recommend that the next inspection be a full section 5 reinspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2013

- Improve achievement in all subjects, but especially reading and mathematics, and make teaching consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that work is challenging enough for all pupils, especially the more able
 - making sure that marking and feedback are consistent in all classes, so that pupils are told precisely how to improve their work
 - setting tasks in all classes to develop pupils' independent learning skills and using time more effectively in lessons so that progress accelerates
 - using teaching assistants to support learning at all times in lessons
 - getting pupils to record more learning in their exercise books to demonstrate good work and progress
 - making sure that pupils in all classes have positive attitudes to learning
 - developing a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics in all classes.
- Further strengthen the impact of leadership and management by:
 - adding rigour to targets set for teachers to improve their work, including linking targets to faster progress for pupils
 - further developing the analysis of information about how well pupils are doing to look at more groups, including the boys and girls, and those who are new to the school.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 17 June 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and members of the senior team, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, a group of pupils, two representatives of the local authority, and a headteacher of a nearby school who supports the headteacher as a 'system leader'. The inspector observed four lessons jointly with the headteacher. He looked at pupils' books and other work.

Context

A Year 2/3 teacher has left the school and been replaced, on a temporary basis, until the permanent replacement takes up appointment from September 2014. A senior teacher, who is also a Year R/1 teacher, is on maternity leave and has been replaced, for a year, by another teacher who is filling both roles. The leadership team has been strengthened by the internal appointment of two senior teachers. The governing body has had its delegated budget returned by the local authority. The governing body has continued to explore options for the future organisation of the school but no firm decisions have been taken.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and staff have continued to make rapid improvements in the areas for development identified by the section 5 inspection. The systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching have been strengthened and the quality of teaching has improved. Policies that were new at the time of the previous monitoring inspection are now firmly established and older procedures are now securely part of the school's typical practices. This is evident in the better rates of progress made by pupils across the school, including in Year 2, where there has been most noticeable underachievement in the past. There have been improvements in the teaching of phonics, which is now a strength of the school. School policies in relation to marking have been consolidated and pupils now respond to their teachers' comments in a 'learning dialogue', which they say is very useful for helping them to improve their work. Teaching assistants have been deployed more effectively and now give good support and guidance for pupils in classes, as well as recording pupils' progress more rigorously and carefully. Pupils say that their lessons are 'exciting' and they find topics stimulating. They say their tasks are now good at making them think hard about working things out before making answers, and this is a further indication that teachers have improved their work and planned more carefully to ensure that pupils make better progress in lessons.

The governing body continues to provide good challenge as well as support for the school. Governors have been trained well and have grown confidently in their roles. They make regular visits to the school and to classrooms and are much more capable of analyzing school performance data and asking pertinent questions of the

headteacher and other members of staff when necessary; for instance, in tracking the progress made by those pupils for whom the school receives special support funding. The governing body has valued the rigour of the regular pupil progress meetings held with the local authority and has welcomed the advice and guidance provided by the neighbouring headteacher who acts as the school's system leader. The governing body has begun to hold discussions about the future organisation of the school, but no firm plans have been agreed yet.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and this has enabled the senior leadership team, and other leaders in the school, to press forward determinedly with improvements to school policies and procedures. This helps to explain why all groups of pupils, including most of the pupils for whom the school receives special support funding, are making much better progress than at the time of the previous monitoring visit.
- Improvements have been most evident in the teaching of phonics and other aspects of literacy, such as reading. Pupils have many more opportunities to develop their writing skills through different subjects and topics.
- The assessment information on pupils' progress has been strengthened further by the addition of a new, and tighter, tracking system which enables teachers to plot the progress of different groups of pupils more accurately so that work set can enable pupils to make faster progress.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good, and that there are no incidents of silly behaviour in lessons, because teachers now manage their learning groups better and there are always three adults in the class to help pupils through any work difficulties they encounter. Attendance is good and improving.
- The quality of marking has continued to improve, with all teachers using the 'next steps' approach to show pupils how to improve their work further. Pupils can now respond to teachers' comments if they wish to ask for clarification or to indicate that they have achieved the required improvement.
- There is a good transition programme throughout the school. This has improved the way new pupils are helped to settle in quickly and well, but also improved the transition from year group to year group as pupils progress through the school. The neighbouring headteacher who is system lead for the school says that this process has also been invaluable in enabling pupils from the school to settle well in their first year in secondary school.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The new teaching approaches in Year 2 have to further accelerate the pace of pupils' progress so that the history of underachievement is eradicated and pupils rapidly reach, and exceed, expected levels of performance.
- There are some inconsistencies in the way teachers use the 'next steps' marking approach, in that some comments for pupils are not as clear as they should be and pupils said that sometimes they could not read what the teacher had written.

- There is still evidence of poorly presented work in some books, despite the school's focus on improving this aspect of pupils' work.
- The new data tracking programme does not yet identify clearly enough how well the most-able pupils are making progress and so does not inform teachers fully how best to provide for them or how to evaluate the impact of current tasks set for this group.

External support

The local authority provides excellent support for the school and challenges it rigorously to improve further. The work of the system leader for the school has helped the headteacher to push forward confidently and with great determination with her improvements in approaches to monitoring and tracking. School improvement meetings with the local authority have been valued highly by the headteacher and the governing body. Good training for governors has enabled the governing body to improve strongly. The recent local authority audit of school performance and improvement provided the school with a good and accurate report of how well it is making progress. As a consequence of this high-quality support, the headteacher is able to demonstrate clearly that the school has developed strongly since the section 5 inspection and is capable of continuing to do so, in a self-sustaining way.