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James Singleterry
Headteacher
Stukeley Meadows Primary School
Wertheim Way
Huntingdon
PE29 6UH

Dear Mr Singleterry

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stukeley Meadows Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 December 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 recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- refine the school's improvement plan so that it focuses more precisely on raising achievement
- review the way that assessment information is used to set academic targets for pupil.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, four members of the governing body and spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school action plan and the school's assessment documentation. You accompanied me during visits to several classes in the school where we observed teaching and looked at pupils' work.

Context

Since the inspection the deputy headteacher has been seconded to lead another local school. The deputy headteacher's responsibilities are currently distributed among the existing leadership team and two acting assistant headteachers have been appointed for the autumn term. Two teachers have left the school. Temporary replacements are in place now, and permanent staff have been appointed for September 2014. One teacher is on maternity leave.

Main findings

Your plans to improve teaching are working. Better planning and use of assessment information is leading to swifter progress in all year groups. You have prioritised the development of writing across the school and teachers are now providing pupils with much richer opportunities for practicing their skills. This is especially effective when pupils are spending time talking and thinking about their writing before they begin their work. Overall standards of writing in Key Stage 1 are in line with national expectations and are rising. Higher expectations and good teaching mean that some of the more-able pupils are writing exceptionally well.

The proportion of pupils reaching a 'good level of development' in the Early Years Foundation Stage is in line with national levels. Improvements to the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) have led to an increased number of pupils in Year 1 reaching the expected level in the recent phonics screening check. The improving picture in Key Stage 1 means that pupils are now receiving a much stronger start to their education than previously.

Although pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are now catching up fast, their standards in writing remain below those expected for their age because of the legacy of underachievement in the past. This means that pupils in Key Stage 2 are learning the basic skills of writing that should have been embedded by the end of Key Stage 1.

Standards in mathematics are variable. They are at least in line with national expectations in all year groups other than Year 4, where they are low. In Years 3 and 5 they are above expectations. In reading all year groups are in line with national expectations, with the exception of Year 4 where they are low and progress is slow.

The improvements in teaching have not been as effective in marking where too much variability exists. Some teachers provide pupils with very useful guidance whereas others provide little more than a tick. Your monitoring of this is not securing rapid enough progress.

Your improvement plan is too long and is overly complex. This makes it more difficult for you and school leaders to evaluate the impact that your actions are having. You have overhauled the way the school gathers and uses assessment information. Teachers are now much more accurate in their assessments and you have secured a clear understanding of how well individual pupils and groups are doing. You are not using this information to set future targets so that you can identify when pupils are 'on track' or 'off track' as they move through the school.

Governors are well informed and monitor the school's progress well. They are supportive of the work that you are doing whilst providing you with appropriate levels of challenge.

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 is providing an appropriate level of support. An implementation group was set up following the inspection which brought together school leaders, governors and representatives of the local authority. This has been useful in monitoring the school's progress. The local authority has provided support for specific areas of the school, such as the Early Years Foundation Stage and an improvement advisor who has helped with leadership development.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely

Chris Moodie

Her Majesty's Inspector