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Mrs Tracey Caffull
Headteacher
Great Bentley Primary School
Plough Road
Great Bentley
Colchester
CO7 8LD

Dear Mrs Caffull

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Great Bentley Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 March and 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:

- ensure that all teaching across the school and across the full curriculum is consistently good
- ensure that the external review of governance is carried out and acted upon.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Your action plan was evaluated. We visited each classroom to see pupils and teachers at work and looked at some pupils' books.

Main findings

The previous inspection report noted that the 'passionate and determined leadership' in the school was leading to improvement. Since then, the pace of improvement has increased and the impact has become more evident. The school's internal monitoring indicates that in mathematics the gap between the school's attainment and that found nationally has reduced this year with a sharp increase in attainment and progress. Pupils told me that in the past, mathematics was too easy, but they enjoy mathematics more now because it is harder and so not 'boring'.

Since the previous inspection, in writing there has been a marked increase in pupils' achievement, resulting from giving pupils more opportunities to write in different contexts and providing more informal opportunities. Across English and mathematics there has been an effective focus on identifying and moving on pupils who were not making sufficient progress. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and how much progress they should be making, have increased. The curriculum has improved with for example, pupils in Year 5 being excited by work in science, but before the next inspection you need to ensure there is good quality provision across the full national curriculum and religious education.

Governors have stepped up their level of support and challenge. A small core group has become much more involved in regular monitoring of your school's performance. You have secured their approval to increase the money spent on teaching to ensure a smaller ratio of pupils to teachers and accelerate progress further. The leadership of mathematics and English has improved. Subject leaders are now able to observe and work with teachers successfully to improve subject teaching. They were able to demonstrate to me the success of their recent work. Overall, things are looking positive, but some effective teachers are leaving at the end of term. You have faith that the new appointments you have made for next term will continue to drive forward the school's improvement.

I will carry out a further visit and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge in the spring term.

External support

You and your senior leaders have been pro-active in seeking out support from other schools. The Colne Cluster provides opportunities for you to meet with and learn from other headteachers. It also provides useful opportunities for the chairs of governing bodies to meet and teachers to effectively exchange ideas and information. For example, the teacher responsible for science has visited a school in the cluster to learn from their subject inspection by Ofsted's national lead for science. You have established a beneficial arrangement with the headteacher of an already 'good' primary school in Colchester. Governors have arranged for some

training on the use of data to take place shortly which will be provided by the local authority. Governor's perception is that there has been insufficient input from the local authority. The external review of governance mandated by the previous inspection report has now been arranged for the autumn term. A 'stock-take' visit by the local authority has been arranged for next month. Given the time that has elapsed since the school was judged to require improvement, you have responded as a school with more urgency than the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector