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Alison Beckett
Headteacher
Dale Hall Community Primary School
Dale Hall Lane
Ipswich
IP1 4LX

Dear Mrs Beckett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dale Hall Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 July 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 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 school improvement plan by including information about pupils' achievement, with measurable targets, so that school leaders, including governors, can monitor progress
- develop a rigorous policy for checking the school's work which clearly identifies the role of all leaders in the process.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, two governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plan, looked at recent information about pupil progress and considered feedback on Parent View. I visited each classroom and looked at pupils' books from across the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection one teacher has left the school. A newly qualified teacher has been appointed and will take up post in September 2014.

Main findings

You have responded positively to the previous inspection and used the outcomes to help raise expectations amongst the staff team about what pupils at the school can achieve. Staff and pupils have responded well. The work in pupils' books indicates that pupils are making better progress. This is reflected in the school's most recent assessments, which show that more pupils are attaining higher levels in mathematics and writing. During this inspection I also saw some good work in other subjects, including science, history and geography.

The quality of teachers' marking has improved considerably over the course of the year. Teachers provide good feedback to pupils about how to improve their work. Most pupils take pride in their work and the quality of handwriting and presentation is improving.

The improvement plan, which the school developed following the previous inspection, clearly sets out and addresses each of the weaknesses that were identified. Actions are practical, such as providing teachers with the chance to attend training to develop relevant skills and knowledge. However, there are not enough measurable outcomes within the plan to enable senior leaders, including governors, to check on the impact of the school's work. For example, targets for pupils' attainment and progress are not included.

Middle leaders are becoming more active in leading their subjects and reviewing the impact of the school's work. Recently, they have led staff training and carried out checks on pupils' books. However, their exact role within the school's systems for monitoring and evaluation has not yet been fully defined. As a result, the school's process for checking work is not yet sufficiently systematic or rigorous.

Governors are determined to play an active role in ensuring that the school becomes good as quickly as possible. Governors regularly receive detailed information about the school from the headteacher and reported that they feel increasingly well placed to challenge school leaders about the school's performance. Following the inspection, they developed their own action plan to address the shortfalls in governance that were identified. They have already taken action to develop a more well-informed view on the school's performance. For example, a governors' day was held recently and many governors visited the school to look at a specific aspect of school life. Each governor produced a report and the findings will be shared at a forthcoming meeting.

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

Since the inspection in March 2014 the local authority has worked well with the school, providing an appropriate balance of support and challenge. A local authority officer has worked alongside school leaders, carrying out work scrutiny and classroom observations. She has also been involved in the development of the school's improvement plan. Membership of a local network of schools has also benefited the school. Through this network teachers have been able to access training and professional support through subject leader meetings.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector