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Richard Harrison
Head of School
Lynsted and Norton Primary School
Lynsted Lane
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Sittingbourne
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Dear Mr Harrison

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lynsted and Norton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 May 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, academy trustees and directors 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 information about pupils' achievement provided by senior leaders is accurate.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, two subject leaders and two directors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and looked at a range of other documents such as lesson observation notes and records of Trustees' and Directors' meetings.

Context

The number of pupils is increasing and the school now has five single aged classes and one mixed Year 5/6 class. Two part-time teachers and one full time teacher have left since the inspection in May and two teachers have joined the school.

Main findings

Senior leaders are raising expectations about how well pupils should be achieving. The improvement plan is appropriately focused on the aspects requiring improvement which were identified in the section 5 inspection. The plan is closely monitored and arrangements such as six weekly challenge meetings involve academy directors in evaluating the impact of actions taken. However, the minutes of the most recent challenge meeting and the information provided on the academy's website show that, although the school's self-evaluation document is accurate, a more positive picture is being shared about how well pupils are achieving than is actually the case. It is important that this is addressed quickly to ensure that everyone knows exactly what needs to be done to improve.

You, and the vice principal of the Village Academy, carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning. There are useful action plans for several teachers to support them to improve. Your evidence shows that, as a result, the majority of these teachers are successfully improving their work. There is a sharper focus on making sure that a core group of strategies, particularly relating to pupils' writing, become consistent practice across the school. However, the records of lesson observations do not always reflect your key priorities and sometimes targets set for teachers on previous observations are not followed up. This has been an issue in the past when training and agreed strategies have not always been followed up rigorously enough to make sure that agreed changes are happening in every class.

You plan to give teachers much greater involvement in understanding and using information about pupils' achievement and to hold them to account more for the how well their pupils are achieving. Staff have received training and have worked alongside colleagues in the other academies to develop their understanding of how well pupils are achieving in reading, writing and mathematics and to help them identify accurately the next steps for their learning.

Middle leaders are developing their knowledge and skills and their development is supported by regular meetings with colleagues from the other academies in the trust to share expertise, good practice and to plan curriculum changes across all of the academies.

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

Your school currently requires, and benefits from, a range of additional support provided by the Village Academy. For example, the vice principal provides regular and important leadership support. There is also external expertise to ensure that additional funding for specific pupils is used efficiently so that these pupils catch up with their classmates. The school also benefits from external expertise to enhance the teaching of the youngest children and pupils with special educational needs.

I am copying this letter to the Village Academy Board of Directors, the Principal of the Village Academy, the Director of Children's Services for Kent and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector