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Mrs Karen Gay
Headteacher
Dereham Church of England Infant School and Nursery
St Withburga Lane
Dereham
NR19 1ED

Dear Mrs Gay

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dereham Church of England Infant School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 15 September 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 April 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:

- develop and refine the process of monitoring the quality of teaching over time
- use the baseline data in the nursery to intervene early and accelerate the levels of good development in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Publicise the impact of the pupil premium spending on the progress of those pupils it supports each year.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body, subject and senior leaders, pupils, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Teaching was observed in all the classes. The school development plan was evaluated and achievement data was scrutinised. Other documentation was reviewed included governor minutes, pupil's learning stories and a variety of reports written by educational consultants.

Context

Since the school was inspected in April 2014 a review of the governing body has taken place. There have been three new appointments including an Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator.

Main findings

The senior leadership team and governing body have taken swift action to address the issues raised in the recent inspection report. Leaders have been strategic in the deployment of staff within the school to maximise the impact on teaching and learning. The appointment of a new leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage has increased the focus on developing writing and mathematics skills.

The adoption of a new data monitoring tool and subsequent staff training has enabled staff to track progress more closely and respond more quickly when progress slows. Middle leaders are more confident about their roles in accelerating progress, particularly in mathematics. School information from last year shows that standards are rising in Year 1 and Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils gaining a level 3 has risen.

A review of governance has led to a restructuring of the governing body and more focus on holding school leaders to account for the progress of different groups of pupils. School leaders feel that links between governors and subject leaders are stronger and more effective as governors are more knowledgeable and able to ask searching questions about the progress being made by pupils.

The school has been subject to intensive moderation by the local authority and is confident in the accuracy of its assessments.

External support

Since the section 5 inspection in April the school has actively sought support and involvement from a range of local partners. The school is very active in the local cluster and is now working closely with the local authority as part of the Norfolk to good and great programme. Subject leaders have visited other schools and used this experience to improve their own practice. The Diocese of Norwich has also provided strategic support. The school has worked with a range of educational professionals who have undertaken audits of governance and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. School leaders have used these reports to bring about the changes necessary to raise standards across the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk and the Diocese of Norwich.

Yours sincerely

Pete Sewell

Associate Inspector