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Mr Ian Pinnock
Earls Barton Junior School
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Dear Mr Pinnock

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Earls Barton Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- refine and sharpen actions to improve the quality of teaching so that they are clear, measurable and linked to tight time frames
- refine and sharpen actions to improve writing so that they are clear, measurable and linked to tight time frames
- ensure the governing body is closely linked to improvement plans so that it is able to hold school leaders to account more effectively for their actions.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, the senior lunchtime supervisor, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was

evaluated. I toured the school and spoke informally with pupils about their work. I scrutinised a selection of pupils' books. I checked the single central record.

Context

Since the last inspection, the Chair of the Governing Body has resigned and a new Chair has been elected. Two new subject leaders for English have been appointed. Two new teaching assistants have been appointed.

Main findings

Although your action plan identifies the key issues from the recent section 5 inspection, it does not reflect the urgency needed to bring about the necessary improvements quickly. The actions you intend to take to improve the quality of teaching are not precise enough. They do not demonstrate that you have carried out a sufficiently detailed analysis of pupils' achievement data and other information to identify accurately what the key areas for improvement are. Identified measures of success are too broad and infrequent. The plan does not make it clear how the governing body will hold you to account for your work. As a result, the plan is not fit for purpose.

Your plans for improving standards in writing are under-developed. It is unclear which aspects of pupils' writing need to improve in order to raise attainment in this subject. Although teachers have had some writing training, this is too imprecise to address the underachievement of groups of pupils in the school. The subject leaders for English are new to their roles. They have not had the opportunity to contribute fully to plans for improving writing and, consequently, their impact has been minimal.

Teachers' marking is frequent and identifies where pupils are doing well. Where it is most effective, teachers provide pupils with guidance on how to deepen and broaden their understanding. Where this is happening pupils respond well and they make progress in their learning. However, this is inconsistent and not all pupils receive the same quality feedback in order to improve their work.

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 has provided timely and consistent support to the school. It has identified a second consultant headteacher from Wollaston Primary School to support the headteacher and English subject leaders to develop pupils' writing. This support is also available to aid senior leaders in checking the impact of teaching on the progress pupils make. The local authority has met with the Chair of the

Governing Body to review the school action plan and offer advice on its development.

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

Yours sincerely

Jan Connor
Her Majesty's Inspector