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Neil Jackson
Headteacher
Hadleigh Community Primary School
Station Road
Hadleigh
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Dear Mr Jackson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hadleigh Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- restructure the senior leadership team in order that responsibilities are shared more widely and to ensure a greater focus on the key priorities for school improvement, that is, developing the quality of teaching and improving pupil progress
- ensure that the current version of its action plan addresses explicitly all areas for improvement identified in the recent full inspection, giving clear dates and deadlines for monitoring success criteria as well as for undertaking actions
- carry out an external review of governance.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher and with three representatives of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. The school action plans were evaluated and you took me on a tour of the school. You shared the results of this year's Key Stage 2 national tests with me.

Context

Since the last inspection, two teachers have left the school and four have joined. Five teaching assistants and three apprentices have also joined the school. Two members of the governing body have left and plans are underway to replace them. The local authority installed a portable classroom during the summer holiday and has also made changes to the front entrance in order to improve security.

Main findings

The proportion of pupils who attained Level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2 tests was above the national average this year. The proportion of pupils attaining above the expected level has also improved significantly in reading. The school's own data show that a similar proportion of pupils made expected progress this year to last in writing and mathematics but fewer did so in reading.

Following the recent inspection, an action plan was written immediately to address the issues identified. This, in your own words, was a 'huge and unwieldy' document but it contained all the necessary information. The plan has been revised, with support from the local authority and the school's challenge partner, and is now a much more useable and suitable document to steer improvement. However, there has been an element of 'throwing the baby out with the bath water' and some improvement points identified in the inspection report are no longer explicit in the plan.

You now need to revise the plan further to ensure that there is a sharp focus on all improvement points detailed in the inspection report. Further, although the plan states when actions are to take place and how they are to be monitored, it does not indicate when monitoring will take place and, in some cases, by whom. The role of the governing body in monitoring the plan's progress is also unclear.

You have increased the number of classes so that there are now three in every year group. This has reduced the class sizes in some year groups and has increased the size of the teaching team.

The approach to transition between year groups is now more rigorous. Procedures were improved to ensure that all teachers and teaching assistants knew the needs of their new class well, before the start of this academic year.

Immediately after the inspection in June the school rightly increased its focus on writing. All pupils completed a piece of unaided writing at the end of the summer term and this was assessed by staff. This is now the first piece of work in pupils' current exercise books so that staff have easy reference to the work individuals are capable of and are able to quickly address any drop in standards over the summer holiday. Pupils are encouraged to refer to this baseline piece of work in order to challenge themselves to improve further.

A staff meeting was held to discuss ideas for extending writing opportunities across the curriculum. Further meetings are planned to develop these ideas. A new marking policy has been introduced to improve the quality of feedback given to pupils. The approach has been implemented consistently throughout the school and teachers are clearly working very hard in this area. The quality of written feedback, however, is variable and is having far greater impact on improving pupils' work in some classes than in others.

A more focused approach to the continuing professional development of staff has been introduced and there is a clear plan for this term. A lesson study approach is being trialled by the mathematics team and there are plans to extend this to other subjects in the near future. However, although these are positive steps, opportunities to share best practice are not being fully exploited and are yet to have a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching.

In response to issues with storing and interrogating pupil assessment data, the school introduced a new information management system shortly before the previous inspection. Although the school now feels comfortable with the system in place, further development is needed. Leadership of this crucial area is shared amongst members of the leadership team and, in some cases, forms part of a long list of areas of responsibility. This needs to be reviewed to ensure that the use of assessment data becomes an effective driver for school improvement.

A review and restructure of the senior leadership team is planned but has not yet taken place. The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are not always clear and are not equally balanced. You and the governors now need to complete the restructure, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that leadership of the school's key priorities for improvement is clear and fully effective.

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

Although there has been no direct involvement in the past, you are now working with an intervention officer from the local authority and have been provided with support in developing your action plan. The local authority has also arranged a 'challenge partner' for you and I know that this is a relationship that you feel will be very beneficial to the school. The local authority has not yet provided support to the governing body and this would be useful in order for them to develop their ability to act as critical friends and to hold you and your senior leaders to account.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector