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Charlotte Whyte
Headteacher
Woodton Primary School
Norwich Road
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Bungay
Norfolk
NR35 2LL

Dear Mrs Whyte

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 October 2014, accompanied by Samantha Stewart, Associate Inspector, 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 us 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 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 bringing about rapid improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- Revise the action plan so that actions are closely aligned to pupils' achievement, with crisp criteria for success that are easy to measure and not open to interpretation.
- Identify one person to lead on each planned action and another to monitor progress.
- Decide how and when you and the governors are going to evaluate how well the school is progressing towards achieving the goals.
- Ensure that all staff and governors know precisely what they need to do in order to deliver the necessary improvements.
- Check that all statutory requirements are met.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. HMI met with the local authority representative the day before. The school development plan and the action plan were evaluated. You took us on a guided tour of the school where we looked briefly at provision in both classes and at a very small sample of pupils' work in Key Stage 2.

Context

A temporary part-time assistant headteacher has been appointed while the governing body completes its recruitment of a permanent deputy headteacher.

Main findings

The action plan is not fit for purpose because the planned actions lack sufficient clarity and they are not linked closely enough to pupils' achievement. They are too vague to communicate to staff and governors what it is that they must do to raise pupils' achievement. It is unclear who is responsible (and therefore accountable) for leading each of the planned actions and when and how checks will be made to measure progress towards them. School improvement work has begun but the approach is not coordinated through a robust cohesive plan of action.

You know what needs to be achieved to move the school forward. For example, you have been instrumental in setting up systems and procedures to help staff and governors to measure the progress that individuals and groups are making and to keep track of their attainment. You have developed stronger links with the on-site independent nursery so that children coming into Reception settle in quickly. Current data are showing underachievement of some pupils in the Key Stage 2 class. It will be important to ensure that the work set for pupils in this class is sufficiently challenging in all subjects.

New systems for regularly checking the quality of teaching are enabling you to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses. You have made your expectations explicit and, where improvement has not followed quickly after advice and support, you are rightly using formal procedures to address weak teaching. You and the governors recognise that strong leadership at all levels is essential to make the necessary changes. Recruitment is underway to appoint a new deputy headteacher and one other teacher, and you and the governors are prepared to readvertise if the right people cannot be found in this round. Resources are carefully organised and the generously-stocked library is used effectively to promote pupils' enjoyment in books and stories. You have introduced a new behaviour policy that staff are implementing consistently.

The governing body realises that it has not held the school to account with sufficient rigour. Before the inspection it took the first steps towards rectifying this and the recent external review of governance has been beneficial in identifying where further improvements can be made. Governors have set a deadline by which a plan of action will be completed to improve the governing body's effectiveness. Through training, governors are developing an understanding of how to interpret pupil performance data so that they are in a stronger position to ask the right questions to hold school leaders to account. They have not had enough input thus far into the school's action plan so that they know how to measure the school's progress towards achieving the intended goals. The governing body is suitably informed of how additional government funding (pupil premium) is spent on pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after. It is aware that it needs to ensure that spending achieves value for money in terms of better outcomes for those pupils for whom it is intended. It will be important for the school to closely monitor the achievement of pupils looked after by the local authority. You and the governors must ensure that you make a timely response in updating policies and procedures to reflect new statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education, such as the latest guidance on recruiting staff.

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 input the school received from an external consultant and the local authority to devise a useful plan of action was ineffective and this has slowed the school down in moving forward. The local authority recognises that the school is experiencing a period of change, with recruitment for a deputy headteacher and another teacher underway together with some temporary arrangements to cover maternity leave. It has wisely commissioned an effective part-time assistant headteacher temporarily to assist you in driving forward school improvement. It has also agreed to raise the level of support it will provide to meet the school's current needs. The governing body has benefited from an external review of governance and pupil premium funding which was arranged by the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector