

Serco Inspections  
Colmore Plaza  
20 Colmore Circus  
Queensway  
Birmingham  
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T:** 0121 679 9164  
**Direct email:** tim.ogbourn@serco.com



8 October 2014

Charlotte Whyte  
Headteacher  
Ellingham Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Church Road  
Ellingham  
Bungay  
Norfolk  
NR35 2PZ

Dear Mrs Whyte

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ellingham Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to your school accompanied by Samantha Stewart, Associate Inspector, on 7 October 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 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 rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- Ensure that planned actions for improvement are linked closely to pupils' achievement with sharp criteria to measure success.
- Identify a lead professional for 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 make the necessary improvements.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the assistant headteacher, five members 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. You took us on a guided tour of the school visiting all classes and we observed the pupils at play during the lunch break.

## **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 useful as a tool to coordinate the school's work in driving forward school improvement. The planned actions are not linked closely enough to pupils' achievement. They are not sufficiently explicit to explain to staff and governors what it is that they must do to make the necessary improvements 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. Promising improvements have been made in mathematics with support from a school led by a local leader in education. New systems for checking the quality of teaching regularly are enabling you to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Your explicit expectations have helped to make considerable improvements in teaching evident in some classes. With support from the governing body to raise the quality of teaching, you are setting targets for improvement backed up with training if needs be.

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 you and the governors are prepared to readvertise if the right person cannot be found in this round. Pupils' behaviour has improved because you have introduced a new behaviour policy that staff are implementing consistently. The school is settled and pupils' learning is not interrupted through poor behaviour. At lunch time pupils mix well and play happily.

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 skills in interpreting pupil performance data so

that they are in a stronger position to ask the right questions to hold school leaders to account. However, they have not had enough input into the school's action plan, and are therefore not in a position to confidently gauge the school's progress towards achieving its 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 and the quality of the guidance and/or additional support they receive.

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 robust action plan was ineffective and the process 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 underway together with some current and future 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, the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk and the Diocese of Norwich.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**