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Emma Nicholson
Headteacher
Beck Row Primary School
The Street
Beck Row
Bury St Edmunds
IP28 8AE

Dear Mrs Nicholson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Beck Row Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 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. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- train subject leaders, particularly those new to this role, so that all understand how to use data and other information to raise standards
- review the deployment of teaching assistants to ensure the best possible match between their skills and pupils' specific needs.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I met four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, to discuss the action

taken since the last inspection. I also met the school's challenge partner and spoke to a local authority representative. I met three teaching assistants and spoke to several more as we visited classrooms. I looked at pupils' books, reviewed the school's action plan and checked the single central record for newly appointed staff.

Context

Two new teachers, including the deputy headteacher, joined the school in September 2014.

Main findings

You now have a complete senior leadership team with clear roles and responsibilities. The staff said that the new academic year started with a strong sense of purpose and a clear understanding of your plans for improvement. You know what needs to be done to tackle weaknesses and the school action plan is a useful tool to bring about rapid change. It clearly shows how the key issues identified at the last inspection will be addressed and actions are closely aligned to raising pupils' achievement. With the support of senior leaders, you conduct frequent evaluation of the school's progress towards achieving your goals. Subject leaders, however, do not yet have the necessary skills to contribute fully to this work. Some are new to their roles and most require further training, including observing outstanding practice in teaching, to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their subject.

Staff are highly committed to making improvements. The environment for learning is well organised and inviting. Your idea of extending the Early Years Foundation Stage classroom is good as it maximises the use of space for practical activities. Eye-catching displays of pupils' work show the pride that pupils are taking in all aspects of their work. The school promotes good behaviour exemplified by the 'Pots of Gold' and anti-bullying displays. The new deputy headteacher is keen to ensure that older pupils promote excellent behaviour even more at the school, such as through restorative approaches.

Significant work has focused on improving the quality of teaching and, in particular, the effectiveness of teaching assistants' support. The teaching assistants are highly committed and find the new deployment sheets extremely helpful. They say that teaching is better organised and that they now know exactly what they are supposed to be doing in class. They have noticed a clear shift from general support to being the '*eyes and ears of the teacher*'. The new weekly meeting enables good practice to be quickly shared. There is still more to do to ensure that teaching assistants work where they are most needed and that their specific skills are closely matched to the needs of pupils.

With the support of staff and governors, you have already improved several aspects of the curriculum, such as time dedicated to the teaching of science, a new scheme for the teaching of mathematics, more practise of writing skills across subjects and rigorous marking and assessment strategies. It is too early to see the full impact of these developments but the positive way staff are responding to your new initiatives clearly shows that the school has the capacity to become a good school. During my visit we shared ideas about the teaching of oral skills to improve pupils' confidence and give them more opportunities to develop their questioning skills. A full audit of how the school is promoting pupils' curiosity for learning would be valuable.

Through the School Progress Action Group (SPAG), regular visits and examination of data, governors know the school well. They have produced their own plan to address the key issues raised at inspection and give senior leaders the right amount of support and challenge to improve the school quickly.

External support

The school's challenge partner is the headteacher of a successful school. He visited the school only recently and it is too early to see the impact of your joint work. The local authority has provided advice in areas such as assessment in early years and analysis of the 2014 results. You have also received support from human resources to deal with staffing issues and governors value the training provided by the local authority's governor services. Staff have opportunities to share best practice through links with local schools and the Barrow Teaching School Alliance.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter has been copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy