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Linda Grainger
Headteacher
Queensway Infant School and Nursery, Thetford
Queensway
Thetford
IP24 3DR

Dear Mrs Grainger

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Queensway Infant School and Nursery, Thetford

Following my visit to your school on 4 March 2015, 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 November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to make sure:

- measures to improve attendance are consistent and rigorous, including rewards for good attendance
- the governing body is strengthened through the recruitment of new governors
- middle leaders are given time to check pupils' achievement in their subjects in all classes from Nursery to Year 2
- pupils are taught how to present their work neatly and carefully
- pupils are given time to improve their work based on the advice given to them by their teachers.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers, pupils, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated. You took me on a walk round the school where we observed learning in every class. The deputy headteacher and I looked at pupils' work in mathematics and literacy in Years 1 and 2. We also looked at the new system for checking pupils' achievement.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection three members of staff have not been in school.

Main findings

The headteacher has produced a clear action plan with support from the local authority. As a result of sharp targets that are focussed on the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 inspection, there have been improvements in the level of challenge given to all pupils in lessons. Teachers are starting to use a new planning system that is focussed on what they expect different groups of pupils to learn in each lesson. The marking and feedback policy has been reviewed. Teachers have taken on board these improvements and as a result the quality of learning in lessons has improved. However they recognise that there is more to be done especially in improving presentation in pupils' books including how pupils write numbers and letters accurately and neatly.

Teachers in the Nursery and Reception classes have been given support by various different advisers. However they remain confused about the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The current action plan is not fit for purpose because it does not focus on key areas for improvement in curriculum, teaching of key skills and making sure children have enough opportunities to develop their writing.

The deputy headteacher has revised the system for tracking pupils' progress and has started pupil progress meetings with teachers. Middle leaders know what their responsibilities are and take these very seriously, but they currently have no time to evaluate learning, teaching and pupils' progress in the subjects they are responsible for.

There has been an external review of governance. However the outcomes, although well-intentioned, do not address the fact that the governing body relies on two external governors. This means there is insufficient challenge or support for the school.

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 school has received good advice and support from the designated local authority adviser. As result the school action plan is fit for purpose, and learning and teaching are improving. However conflicting advice, especially about the Early Years Foundation Stage, has not been helpful. Also the local authority was aware of the lack of governors and has done little to strengthen the governing body or make sure governors are carrying out their statutory duties.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority – Director of Children's Services