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Miss Marianne Terry
Headteacher
Sutton Valence Primary School
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Kent
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Dear Miss Terry

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sutton Valence Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 April 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2013. 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:

- Finalise the school's action plan, ensuring:
 - actions to improve the quality of teaching are made explicit
 - the week by week schedule of tasks reflects all the actions in the plan.

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector met with the headteacher, the full governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the steps taken since the monitoring inspection in March 2015. The school's revised action plan and the local authority plan were reviewed.

Context

Since the second monitoring inspection in March 2015 a new substantive deputy headteacher has started, with responsibility for English across the school. The same temporary teachers remain in Year 1 and Year 5. There is a new part time temporary teacher in Year 6 and the deputy headteacher teaches the class for the remainder of the week. Two new permanent teachers, one of whom will lead Key Stage 1 and mathematics, have been appointed and will start in September. Three additional governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

At the second monitoring inspection, in March 2015, senior leaders and governors were not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. This is because there was no targeted plan to systematically tackle school improvement. During this inspection Her Majesty's Inspector focused on the steps taken to create and implement a suitable action plan.

The development of a new school 'rapid action plan' is well under way. The plan addresses the right areas for improvement and includes useful milestones so that leaders and governors can check the school's progress. There are aspirational targets to improve standards. The helpful schedule of tasks sets out exactly what should be tackled each week, so that everyone knows what they are expected to do. This should now be checked to ensure that it links exactly to the action plan and there are no omissions. The headteacher articulates clearly the programme of staff training and development to improve the quality of teaching. Further work is needed to make this explicit in the written plan.

The local authority has sensibly provided a National Leader of Governance to provide additional support to the governing body. New, experienced governors have also been recruited. This has strengthened the governing body. Although few in number, governors are fully committed to challenging and supporting the school. They have a good understanding of how to use the school's action plan to check for themselves how well the school is progressing towards its milestones.

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 local authority has written formally to the school setting out their concerns about standards. The local authority is rightly offering a wide range of support from teaching and learning consultants in order to improve the quality of teaching. However, this is not well coordinated. Consultants have not given the headteacher dates for their visits, which is holding the school's planning back. In addition,

consultants' plans do not link closely enough to the school's needs. The local authority provides helpful support for governance, including the appointment of the National Lead for Governance to offer ongoing guidance.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kent and as below.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard
Her Majesty's Inspector