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Karen Foster
Interim headteacher
Grimoldby Primary School
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Grimoldby
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LN11 8SW

Dear Mrs Foster

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Grimoldby Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 May 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 December 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 recent section 5 inspection. They should urgently ensure that:

- governance is strengthened so that the capacity of the school to improve quickly is secure
- arrangements are made for governors to systematically check plans and policies to ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements
- governors monitor robustly whether the changes being made to improve the school are making enough difference.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the two senior teachers and the subject leaders for mathematics and English. I also met with three other teachers and groups of pupils from Years 4 and 6. I met two representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also held a meeting with a representative from the local authority. I made short visits to each class with you and looked at the school's action plans as well as the findings of recent external reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium. I also scrutinised the single central record, the school's child protection policy and the newly drafted fire evacuation plan.

Context

The school's substantive headteacher is currently absent due to ill health. You have been leading the school since the start of the Summer term in your capacity as a local authority headteacher. The Year 3 and Year 4 class teachers have recently returned to work following periods of absence.

Main findings

School leaders and governors have not responded quickly or effectively enough to remedy the weaknesses identified by the previous section 5 inspection. While school leaders devised an action plan following the section 5 inspection, governors have not checked closely enough that the actions identified in the plan have actually been implemented, let alone whether they have been effective. They have relied too heavily on information presented by the school. This, in part, is because the school's action plan does not set out precise or sufficiently frequent milestones against which improvements can be checked but also because governors have not sought additional evidence to confirm the accuracy of information they have been given.

Despite receiving additional support and training since the section 5 inspection, including through an external review of governance, governors have continued to be ineffective in holding the school to account. Only in recent weeks have governors recognised fully that governance is still not strong enough. In light of the recent review, governors are now completing a skills audit with a view to reconstituting the governing body from the beginning of July. However, previous and more recent failings in governance call into question the capacity of the governing body to offer the support and challenge needed by the school.

Governors have been slow to ensure that all safeguarding policies and procedures meet requirements. For example, only very recently have additional checks on staff been made in light of changes to legislation last year. Governors were not fully aware of the new requirements and the checks have been completed only because the interim headteacher identified this omission on joining the school. Similarly, governors had not, until very recently, ensured that the school's evacuation

procedures matched changes to the school building. The experienced interim headteacher has now ensured that all aspects of safeguarding meet requirements.

Not enough has been done to improve the school since the inspection. For example, while the school commissioned a review of its use of the pupil premium, the findings of the review have not been implemented. The school does not currently track the progress or attainment of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium other than in Year 2 and Year 6. Given the recommendations from the previous inspection, this is a serious failing. Tracking in Year 6 shows that gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school remain too wide. Strategies to track pupils' progress in other years have yet to be implemented. This explains why senior staff and governors do not currently have a clear view of how well different groups of pupils in different year groups are doing in all years. Data from Year 6 pupils shows much improved attainment from last year, in part because it is a more able cohort. Leaders and managers, including the school's two senior teachers, judge that the school's data for pupils' achievement by the end of Year 2 is not sufficiently accurate. However, this weakness has not been addressed.

Actions to improve teaching in the early years are proving to be effective. The curriculum has been changed to ensure that children receive enough opportunities to develop their numeracy skills and raise their attainment in speaking, listening and reading. The improved curriculum also provides carefully planned opportunities for teachers and other adults to intervene to raise children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. As a result, higher proportions of children are on track to achieve a good level of development than before.

Very recent changes are beginning to bring improvements to other aspects of the school, particularly with regard to pupils' behaviour. All of the pupils I met spoke of how behaviour has improved this term. They enjoy rising to the interim headteacher's 'challenge of the week', for example, to walk on the left-hand side of the corridor or to enter assembly in silence. They say that these small changes are making a big difference and that people are being kinder and more considerate to each other as a result, including by picking up pupils' bags that fall off their pegs. They also enjoy the community feeling provided by the daily assemblies implemented this term.

Staff report that morale has risen recently. They say this is because roles and responsibilities have been clarified this term with the result that staff know precisely what is expected of them and particularly, what they need to do to help improve the school. Teachers are excited about implementing a new curriculum later this term, not least because they have received good quality training to support their planning. Staff are also very supportive of the vision which underpins the new curriculum, particularly with its focus on problem-solving and investigative work. During the inspection, I saw Year 6 pupils thrive as they checked the accuracy of mathematical statements using a range of methods, showing considerable numerical dexterity as they worked. Good strategies to improve the quality of pupils' writing were seen in

Year 5 as pupils' marked each others' work against their individual targets. Pupils in Year 4 said they were pleased to have their usual teacher back, not least because they had become confused about calculation methods. This is because not all staff had implemented the school's calculation policy properly.

These improvements, though important, are only recent and the school has not made the progress in bringing about improvements it should have since the section 5 inspection.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. We agreed that I would return to the school as soon as can be arranged to undertake improvement work with senior staff and governors.

External support

The school has not made the most of the range of support provided by the local authority. During the inspection, a representative from the local authority presented a list of actions taken to support the school. These have included guidance on school improvement planning, scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of teaching. The local authority has also worked with the governing body to help strengthen this aspect of leadership. However, despite these actions, the school is not improving quickly enough. The school is however, now benefitting from the good leadership of the interim headteacher, provided by the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector

- Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority