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Marion Link
Headteacher
Swaffham CofE VC Infant School
White Cross Road
Swaffham
PE37 7RF

Dear Ms Link

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Swaffham CofE VC Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 6 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 February 2015. 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, governors and other stakeholders are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

The school should take immediate action to:

- improve the capacity of governance to enable governors to provide adequate and appropriate challenge and support to the school and work with senior leaders to ensure the school meets all of their statutory duties such as monitoring the website for compliance and effectively reviewing the quality of teaching and learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. The school action plans were evaluated and discussed at length. All classes were visited as part of an extended

tour of the school. Informal short observations were made of all teachers present, although some were on a residential trip with the Year 2 pupils and were not available. Children's learning journey logs and pupils' books were scrutinised and attendance and performance data was shared.

Context

The Early Years Foundation Stage teacher left the school on 1 May 2015 and the post has been filled temporarily with a supply teacher until a long-term contracted teacher starts in June. Three vacancies remain on the governing body.

Main findings

You have a clear understanding of the actions required to improve the school and changes are already evident in some classes. The areas requiring improvement are all reflected in a challenging and realistic action plan with clear opportunities for regular monitoring. Aspects of leadership are strong at Swaffham Infants, such as your vision for the school, your capacity to improve the school and the leadership structure you are developing. The strength of governance and governors' ability to fulfil their duties causes grave concerns and requires immediate attention. Senior leaders are aware that this needs to be addressed if the school is going to improve at a rate necessary to provide appropriate good education for pupils.

Attendance has been poor, and low expectations of parents to bring their children to school have become engrained over time; the current leadership is changing parental behaviour gradually. All strategies in place are having impact and attendance is improving. The school is aware that attendance is still not at the national average and must continue to improve.

You are training and supporting staff to become more effective practitioners by planning work for learning outcomes, providing adequate challenge, teaching different ability ranges within a class and asking learning focused questions. Discussions with you, based on your observations of teaching and scrutiny of books, indicate that the majority of staff are making progress towards these targets. This was not evident in all classes visited. Several areas of concern emerged during the visit, including provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage reception classes. Teaching limits children's opportunities to make progress and their activities lack purpose. This was also evident in another class where there was no structure to the lesson, questioning did not challenge pupils and there were no clear learning outcomes anticipated.

Teachers are modelling expectations for good presentation to pupils and this is evident in books. The school marking policy was also apparent in books and pupils' responded to teachers' comments and improved their work. The national information technology curriculum is not being adequately taught but the school has ordered the

necessary equipment to address this urgently.

Safeguarding and health and safety arrangements meet statutory requirements and you are using a health and safety audit to confirm this judgement and add rigour to the processes. Senior leaders are aware that policies need to be developed and updated to reflect any findings from the audit. The school website is at a developmental stage and does not comply with statutory requirements yet.

Ofsted will carry out further monitoring inspections and provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Prior to the inspection in February 2015 the local authority identified Swaffham Infants as causing concern and has allocated an intervention officer to work with the school. He has provided support for the headteacher, middle leaders and has facilitated training to improve questioning in classrooms. He has also implemented an improvement board that includes the headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body.

The school has been linked with a systems leader from a local special school, and informal networks are emerging that help school leaders to share good practice. Subject leaders are part of the local authority's professionals network. The school is also accessing a bespoke support package from the local authority as part of their 'to good and great' project. An external consultant is continuing to be commissioned by the school and she supports middle leaders and general classroom practice. The headteacher has recognised an improvement in attitudes and understanding in staff since the consultant completed her intensive work with teachers. She is now employed to monitor practice, and support as necessary. Senior leaders take an active role in the Norfolk talent pool and headteacher support programme.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Pargeter
Associate Inspector