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15 May 2015

Gary Pilkington
Interim Headteacher
Hadleigh Community Primary School
Station Road
Hadleigh
IP7 5HQ

Dear Mr Pilkington

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hadleigh Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 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 second 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.

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:

- secure permanent leadership for the school
- extend the school's action plan to cover more than one term in order to plot clearly how the school intends to become at least good by the time it is next inspected
- as a matter of urgency, write an action plan in response to the recent review of governance.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also spoke with an associate adviser, working with the school on behalf of the local authority, on the telephone. You took me on a tour of the school and I checked the school's single central record.

Context

There have been a number of staff changes since my first visit to the school, most notably that the headteacher left the school at the end of the spring term. The headteacher's resignation letter was reported by both local and national media. You joined the school as interim headteacher on the 13 April 2015, initially for one term, and your contract has now been extended until the end of the autumn term. In addition, the deputy headteacher stepped down from her role at the end of the autumn term but continues to work at Hadleigh as the school's special educational needs coordinator. Another member of school staff has taken on the role of acting deputy headteacher on a temporary basis. One member of the teaching staff left the school shortly after the start of the summer term.

Main findings

Following my first monitoring visit, the initial momentum was not maintained. Until very recently the school had made only minor progress towards tackling the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in June 2014 and the actions I identified at my first monitoring visit.

There are some examples of effective action having been taken but, until the start of this term, these were too few. An example of effective action is the significant improvements to the way data is managed and has been used over the last two terms. The acting deputy headteacher has successfully ensured that data on pupils' assessment and progress can now be used as a key driver for school improvement.

Since the start of this term the pace of change has increased rapidly. You are an experienced and charismatic leader who has quickly gained the respect and trust of the school community. When you took me on a tour of the site, I found a happy and purposeful school with no hint of lowered morale following the upheaval of the previous term.

You have written a thorough and robust action plan for this term. The plan begins by providing concise contextual information about the school and a list of targets for the end the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This means that your pupils, and what you want for them, are kept at the forefront of leaders' and governors' minds at all times.

The plan has a strong sense of urgency in terms of the number of actions that are planned for a relatively short period of time. However, the plan is achievable and, while aspirational, your aims remain realistic.

The plan now needs to be extended to cover more than one term. Although it is entirely sensible to plan a single term, in depth, as you have done, there also needs to be an over-arching plan that maps the route that the school needs to take in order to be judged good or better at its next inspection. The slow progress that was made between the end of September 2014 and mid-April 2015 means that progress must now accelerate. A clear plan showing how this will be achieved, particularly the milestones that need to be reached by given dates, will help school leaders and governors to ensure that progress remains on track.

A review of governance was planned for November, in response to my recommendation following my first monitoring visit, but this did not take place and no alternative date was set. On taking up your post, you very quickly made arrangements for the review and it finally took place earlier this week. The school has already received a copy of the report from the review and it contains a number of very sensible recommendations for improvement. It is crucial that the governing body now acts on this promptly and that an action plan is put in place straightaway to ensure that recommendations are followed up in a timely fashion.

Although progress was slow for a period of some months, you have 'hit the ground running' and a great deal has happened in a very short time. You have addressed thoroughly all the action points from the first monitoring visit. Consequently, the school is now taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement.

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

External support

The local authority has supported the school well during a challenging period. It is supporting the school to secure a permanent headteacher and has ensured that it has high-quality leadership in the interim. Although somewhat delayed, the local authority has now carried out a review of governance for the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector

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