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26 June 2015

Mr James Kilsby
Headteacher
Cottenham Primary School
Lambs Lane
Cottenham
Cambridge
CB24 8TA

Dear Mr Kilsby

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cottenham Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 June 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 March 2015. 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:

- ensure that other subjects of the curriculum are taught as effectively as English and mathematics.

Context

You have restructured the leadership team and a team of four middle leaders have undertaken the co-ordination of mathematics and English.

Evidence

During the inspection I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders and four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, to discuss

the action taken since the last inspection. I met with a local authority adviser and visited classrooms with you to observe teaching and to look at the work in pupils' books. I evaluated the school's action plan and associated documentation.

Main findings

You have wasted no time in addressing the issues that were identified as in need of improvement. One of the first actions you took was to hold a meeting with parents to discuss the report, and the steps that the school will be taking to improve. The meeting was extremely well attended and parents remain supportive of the school. You have created a Raising Attainment Plan to cover each aspect of the school which was judged to require improvement. The plan is detailed and identifies, precisely, the actions that the school needs to take to improve teaching and achievement. It includes clear criteria for checking the impact that the planned actions are making on pupils' achievement. You meet regularly with senior and middle leaders to review progress and the impact of their work. A member of the Governing Body also attends these meetings in order to keep governors informed of developments.

Along with other school leaders, you now check the progress of pupils more regularly. You look carefully at pupils' work and the quality of marking. The work I saw in pupils' mathematics and English books indicates that this process is already having a positive impact on the quality and quantity of pupils' work. However, in some classes, the work in other subjects was less impressive and sometimes lacked challenge.

The governing body is committed to ensuring that the school improves rapidly. Following the previous inspection, governors immediately arranged for the local authority to carry out a review of governance. Governors have responded swiftly to the recommendations that were made, and this process has helped them to become more effective in holding school leaders to account. When discussing the actions that school leaders have taken, governors now ask about the impact, rather than discussing matters more generally and accepting opinions.

External support

The local authority has provided good support to the school since the previous inspection. An adviser has worked closely with senior leaders, helping to develop and review their plans for improvement. Valuable support has been given to the new subject leaders for mathematics and English. As a result, systems for reviewing these subjects are already more robust. A National Leader in Education, from Southfields Primary School, is also working with school leaders. She has recently conducted a review of the way in which the school uses the additional funding it receives for disadvantaged pupils. This support has been highly valued by senior leaders and is already leading to improvement in the way that the school supports these pupils.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector