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Mrs Julia Humphrey
Headteacher
Old Buckenham Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Humphrey

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Old Buckenham

Following my visit to your school on 10 November 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in February 2015. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk local authority.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2015

- Improve teaching in Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring teachers make better use of information from assessments to set work that builds on what pupils already know, understand and can do
 - improving the marking of pupils' work so that pupils understand clearly what they need to do to improve it and are encouraged by teachers to respond to the feedback that they have been given in their subsequent work
 - ensuring teachers have high expectations of what pupils, especially the most able, can achieve
 - provide more opportunities for teachers to work together and to learn from the best practice available from within the school and elsewhere.

- Improve achievement in writing and mathematics in Year 3 to 6 so that pupils make good progress by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
 - improving pupils' spelling and handwriting in all classes and year groups.

- Improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning by:
 - ensuring pupils always understand the purpose of the activities they are set and take pride in the way they present their work
 - encouraging pupils to show more interest in their learning and more initiative in class by offering contributions to discussion and asking and answering questions more readily
 - providing more activities to occupy pupils during breaks and lunchtimes.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring senior leaders, with the involvement of governors, evaluate the performance of teachers and other staff, and check pupils' achievement frequently and rigorously
 - improving the use of the additional funding for sport and checking more carefully and systematically on its impact
 - providing training and advice to subject leaders so that they fully understand and are competent in their roles and lead their areas of responsibility effectively
 - revising and updating school's policies and website.

- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10 November 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The inspector observed teaching in all classes in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Parents shared their views of the school with the inspector informally at the start of the day. During this inspection, the inspector focused on the impact of leaders at all levels on improving teaching and outcomes for pupils. Subject leaders were observed conducting a book scrutiny, where they evaluated the progress of pupils over time. The views of pupils were obtained informally during lessons and on the playground. A range of documentation was analysed, including minutes of the governing body's meetings, risk assessments and documents relating to pupil safety, such as accident recording. The single central register was also checked.

Context

One newly qualified teacher joined the school in September 2015. There has been a redeployment of teaching staff, with some now responsible for different year groups. Changes to the teaching responsibilities of the deputy headteacher have provided additional strength to the leadership of the school. A new subject leader with responsibility for English has been appointed. The local authority continues to support governors through the school improvement board meetings. Opportunities to learn from other schools are now in place through membership of the Acorn Alliance Trust.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and deputy headteacher continue to drive the areas for improvement for the school with the result that outcomes for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 improved for the last academic year, with a greater proportion achieving the higher levels in writing and mathematics.

School leaders continue to work effectively with partners within the Acorn Alliance Trust. Leaders are now able to share and develop their skills with other schools. This is helping with the implementation of the new curriculum and checking the quality of pupils' work.

The headteacher has developed the skills of subject leaders effectively. They now play an important role in securing improvements in the areas for which they are responsible. At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher had rightly focused on improving the leadership of mathematics; this is now much stronger. As a result, there have been improvements to the way teachers plan lessons. More teachers now ensure that activities enable pupils to develop their mathematical reasoning skills and apply numerical understanding to real-life problems. The subject leader is

ensuring that her training is effectively shared with staff; she also arranges additional personalised training to further develop staff members' subject knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils' achievement in mathematics is starting to improve. Outcomes for Key Stage 2 pupils at the end of 2015 were higher in mathematics, so more pupils left the school better prepared for secondary school in this subject.

The new leader of English is already making significant improvements to the teaching of reading and writing in the school. Although he is new to the role, his actions are improving the standard of presentation, with a positive impact seen in many of the Key Stage 2 classes. Firm plans are underway to develop the provision of reading through the introduction of new quality texts in the library, together with a focus on improving handwriting.

The quality of teaching through Key Stage 2 is improving. In lessons, pupils are keen to participate and are more determined to succeed. Evidence in the books shows that pupils are given opportunities to write in subjects other than English. The older pupils are taking more pride in their presentation, though this still varies too much for the younger pupils. The standard of work produced in science is much improved across all areas of the school.

The effectiveness of the governing body was identified in the full inspection as requiring improvement. Since the last monitoring visit, Governors have been slow to respond fully to recommendations from the external review of governance that took place in the spring. Although they have taken actions that are potentially effective, such as the 'deep dive' day, this one-day visit has only recently happened. Documents show that governors have become distracted by other issues, so they are not holding school leaders fully to account for the necessary improvements or ensuring actions happen quickly and consistently enough. They are still not effectively involved in checking pupils' achievement sufficiently well, which was an area for improvement at the full inspection. As a result, the school's recovery remains fragile. They are reliant on the external support they receive for information about the progress pupils make. Governors have appointed a health and safety governor, and since the last monitoring visit a number of statutory policies have been reviewed and updated.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Subject leaders evaluate the quality of learning in pupils' books effectively. They analyse strengths and weaknesses well, and have plans in place for securing improvement and consistency in their subject areas.
- The deputy headteacher has ensured that performance management targets for support staff are robust. Regular meetings with class teachers are improving the effectiveness of these staff during lesson times. As a result, pupils who are falling behind in English and mathematics now receive more

support in order to catch up, meeting their needs more carefully than previously.

- Teachers follow the school's feedback and marking policy more meticulously. Many are now providing time for pupils to respond to comments, which is developing pupils' sense of responsibility and pride in their work.
- In Years 4, 5 and 6 teachers plan a wider range of work for pupils to achieve and enjoy in English and mathematics. In one English book, a pupil had been supported in writing a poem by the class teacher. The evidence showed an increased determination, together with a number of attempts to develop and redraft the poem. The end result was a highly successful piece of written work.
- School leaders continue to ensure safety procedures, such as risk assessments and pupil safety documentation are fully in place. These are checked by the health and safety governor. They have also been reviewed by the local authority. The single central register is fully compliant with all necessary checks on staff completed and recorded in line with statutory requirements.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- In a minority of lessons, teachers' expectations remain too low. They do not plan activities that require pupils to work hard enough in order to complete them. However, at other times tasks are too challenging because all pupils are completing the same activity. In both cases, pupils become distracted as they are not busy enough.
- In phonics, the pace of learning is not consistent throughout the lesson. Consequently, these younger pupils quickly become distracted because they have to wait too long for their turn without an activity on which to focus their attention. Not enough is sometimes expected of these pupils and so their progress slows.
- Subject leaders are new to their positions and are not yet using their checks on teaching and information about pupils' achievement to hold teachers robustly to account, or to share good practice within the school.
- School leaders are not evaluating the impact of all areas of school life robustly enough. In less structured times, such as lunchtimes, some staff are still not consistently following the school's high expectations and training. This results in confusion and provides an inconsistent message to the pupils regarding their expected behaviour.

External support

The headteacher has carefully ensured external support is focused on improving pupils' achievement. The local authority has supported the school through the regular improvement board meetings and monitoring visits. These visits have provided the school with an external view of the progress it is making. The headteacher has also brokered additional support from the Acorn Alliance Trust so

that teachers can work alongside colleagues in partner schools to develop skills. This is starting to have a positive effect on raising the quality of teaching and learning.