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Ms Margo Barker and Mr Ian Kearns
Interim Headteachers
Rushmere Hall Primary School
Lanark Road
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IP4 3EJ

Dear Ms Barker and Mr Kearns

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rushmere Hall Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 January 2016, 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 June 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 in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the four middle managers, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the governor responsible for overseeing safeguarding arrangements, and the associate standards and excellence officer from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I visited classrooms to look at the teaching of phonics, guided reading and mathematics. I scrutinised the single central register of staff's suitability to work with children. I looked at a range of documents about pupils' performance and the quality of teaching. The school's Ofsted action plan was evaluated.

Context

The headteacher left the school at the end of the summer term 2015. In the autumn term 2015, the school was led by two part-time interim headteachers. One of the interim headteachers continues to lead the school together with an interim headteacher who joined the school at the beginning of this term. This arrangement will continue until the end of this academic year. The governing body has advertised twice for a permanent headteacher.

Six teachers and an assistant headteacher joined the school in September 2015. At the start of the spring term 2016, two more teachers joined the school, together with a family liaison officer and a behaviour support worker.

Main findings

Staff morale following the inspection in June 2015 was low but this is no longer the case. The interim headteachers have successfully restored staff's trust in the leadership of the school. Their work is ably supported by a competent and enthusiastic team of senior and middle leaders. As a result, the important groundwork is complete and there are now no obstacles in the way of school improvement. The actions taken include:

- training for staff to understand how phonics and mathematics must be taught
- training and redeployment of support staff so that they have clear guidance for their work, including supporting children's learning in the early years
- increased opportunities to formally assess pupils' attainment
- a revised timetable for teaching literacy and numeracy in Years 2 and 4
- making sure that pupils with disabilities and special educational needs are almost always taught with the rest of their class
- the appointment of an assistant headteacher, a family liaison officer and a behaviour support worker to increase the pace of school improvement
- providing sufficient time for the assistant headteacher and the special needs coordinator to carry out their responsibilities effectively
- establishing a supportive ethos to develop teachers' performance, including the arrangements for formally observing teaching and learning
- an external review of the use of the pupil premium in November 2015, which highlighted some improvements to consider
- new fencing and increased supervision to help make sure that pupils are safe around the school entrance and carpark.

The action plan sets clear and appropriate actions to address the improvements identified at the June 2015 inspection. The plan does not set clear measurements for success, particularly for good academic outcomes for pupils. Similarly, although the action plan for improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils takes account of the

external review of the pupil premium, the plan does not set or record clear measures of success. The governing body receives suitable information from senior staff about pupils' overall performance, and governors are about to start formal monitoring so that they have first-hand information. The management of staff's performance is linked to the improvements identified within the action plan.

Staff and the governing body acknowledge that pupils' achievements, particularly for disadvantaged pupils or those with disabilities and special educational needs, remain too low. Although assessments show that standards are rising, pupils' progress must accelerate quickly if the aspiration for pupils to reach good academic outcomes by the end of this academic year is reached.

Training for support staff and the recent changes to their deployment have been well received. Systems are in place to check their contribution to pupils' learning. The senior team acknowledges that there is more work to do to make sure that pupils are supported well.

The governor responsible for overseeing safeguarding arrangements is new to the role and there are plans to develop this aspect of the governing body's work in close collaboration with senior staff. The safeguarding policy is out of date and must be reviewed to reflect the government's current guidance on keeping children safe.

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's school improvement board evaluates and challenges the work of the school appropriately and there have been three meetings since the June 2015 inspection. Support to the governing body in appointing interim leaders has worked well to make sure that school staff work cohesively and positively towards the required improvements, and to provide stability in leadership for this academic year. Support from local authority advisers to develop the early years provision and the teaching of phonics has been well received by staff and has improved these aspects of the school's work.

The governing body commissioned an independent external adviser to review pupils' writing. The review helped staff to reflect on their practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector