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Mrs Rosemary Kett
Interim Executive Headteacher
Rockland St Mary Primary School
Three Rivers Federation
School Lane
Rockland St Mary
Norwich
Norfolk
NR14 7EU

Dear Mrs Kett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rockland St Mary Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 September 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 April 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. You should take further action to:

- ensure that plans to supplement teaching and sustain the improvements in pupils' achievement, where there have been changes in staffing, are rapidly implemented.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, three governors including the Chair, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and the mathematics subject leader. I also met with a representative of the teaching school alliance you

are working with and an adviser from the local authority. We spent time in the three classes, talked to pupils about their learning and scrutinised their books. I evaluated your action planning, and we discussed leaders' analysis of how effectively teaching and achievement are improving. I spoke to parents, as they brought their children to school, to discuss their perceptions of how well you are addressing the points identified for improvement at the last inspection.

Context

The substantive headteacher remains absent and you are continuing in the role of executive headteacher across the two schools in the Three Rivers Federation. This is currently for an allocated time of three days a week. Five new governors have joined the federation governing body and you have restructured the team of support staff.

Main findings

Working closely with the deputy headteacher, you have continued to both challenge and support teachers to improve their practice. This has resulted in some changes in staffing across the federation and you have implemented plans to ensure that the expectations set for all teachers are quickly met despite these changes. In some instances, this has meant that extra support is needed and you have put plans in place to ensure that this happens. The deputy headteacher has developed greater rigour in the quality of her work to improve teaching and raise achievement in English across the federation. Professional development opportunities have been carefully planned to make sure that teachers receive the training they need to address the most important priorities for improvement.

The mathematics and early years leaders are receiving good support to fulfil their roles; they understand the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement and show a secure knowledge of the areas for which they hold responsibility. Analysis of the quality of their teaching shows they have the capacity to support others to improve.

Feedback given to pupils about the quality of their work is improving. A particularly strong feature of this is the discussion that takes place between teachers and pupils during lessons. Many pupils explained very clearly how this is the approach that helps them most because it means they understand how to improve their work well. Work is marked regularly and in accordance with the school's policy. In a few instances, pupils have not responded to the marking of their work and so have not made the necessary improvements to it. We saw a number of lessons and in all of them pupils were enthusiastic about their writing and keen to record their ideas. In the mixed Reception and Key Stage 1 class, the youngest children enjoyed a range of activities planned, both indoors and in the newly extended outdoor area, to help them retell the story of 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch'. They made mustard sandwiches, used small world play to enact the story and constructed their own pulleys to send picnics backwards and forwards to 'Mr Grinling'. Older pupils in the

school, affected by historical changes in staffing, still have some ground to make up to reach the standards expected for their age and ability. They were, however, working with concentration and commitment to the tasks they had been set and were responding well to the objectives they had been set for their learning.

Parents say they have confidence in the level of attention and care staff give to their children. They do, however, have concerns about the uncertainty caused by the continuing absence of the substantive headteacher and are worried because they know your appointment is a temporary one. It is evident that governors and the local authority are taking appropriate action to manage this and that you are improving the capacity of leaders to make sustainable improvements to teaching and achievement during the interim period.

There have been substantial changes in the membership of the governing body. New governors have a range of skills and experience and have identified how best they can use these to support the drive for improvement. Minutes of governing body meetings show that they now ask more challenging questions. Governors are increasingly holding leaders to account for using resources appropriately; including the funding the school receives to enhance the learning of disadvantaged pupils. At times, governors have not challenged leaders' responses to their questions rigorously enough. Although they are monitoring the work of the school regularly, they have not specifically focused their visits or the follow up to these on the most important improvement priorities. An adviser from the local teaching school alliance has started to work with governors to sharpen up these aspects of their responsibilities.

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 provided effective support by continuing to allocate you as interim executive headteacher to the schools in the federation, which is ensuring improvement priorities are addressed. Advisers have also brokered the support of the local teaching school alliance, which has facilitated the improvement of teaching well. Support from early years and mathematics advisers has helped leaders develop their capacity to improve provision.

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

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector