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Mrs Carol Green
Executive headteacher
Burston Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Green

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Burston Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 October 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 May 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection, the school was also judged to require improvement

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 the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's improvement plan and the minutes of governing body meetings were evaluated. I visited lessons with the executive headteacher where we observed teaching and looked at pupils' work.

Context

One member of the teaching staff is currently away from school for medical reasons. A temporary teacher is currently being employed to cover the absence.

Main findings

Your improvement plan targets the right priorities. You have created clear strategies to tackle the main concerns identified at the recent inspection. These include milestones that allow you and your staff to measure success as you go. You recognise the urgency of this work and have wasted no time in setting about making things better. Your checks on learning have improved and you are starting to see improvements in pupils' learning. The work in pupils' books shows clear signs of progress in the first half term of this year.

A new assessment system is now in place to measure how well pupils are learning under the new National Curriculum. This approach is straightforward and allows leaders to understand clearly which pupils are where they should be, which ones are doing better than expected and which ones need additional support. The first set of data is about to be put into the new system and it is critical that this is both analysed and, as it is a new system, carefully checked for consistency.

The governing body acted swiftly to commission an external review of its work. This was completed in July 2015 and the resulting report made many recommendations for improvement. These are now being implemented. The governing body has reduced the number of committees that operate from four down to two, and is focusing more precisely on how it holds school leaders to account for the school's performance. The changes are becoming apparent in the minutes of recent meetings, where governors are seen to be asking the right questions.

Your self-evaluation has rightly identified that the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation in Key Stage 2 is not good enough. Too many pupils are making basic errors in their writing: full stops are often missing, capital letters are either absent or are in the wrong place and letters that should extend beneath a line (such as 'r' or 'g') are wholly written above the line. These errors are not being tackled with sufficient urgency.

The learning environment for children in the early years is poor. Both indoor and outdoor spaces are bleak and uninspiring for the youngest children in the school. The facilities that your school grounds offer are not being used effectively at the moment, and this is limiting the number of opportunities that young children are having to explore, play and learn in a motivating environment.

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 is providing effective support for the school. It has increased the amount of support available and a local authority representative is working alongside school leaders to tailor the work on this support. Teachers are attending courses and leaders are working on the improvement planning process. The review of governance was also undertaken by a representative of the local authority: this was a comprehensive and valuable exercise.

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

Chris Moodie
Her Majesty's Inspector