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Mrs Sarah Mules
Martham Primary and Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Mules

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Martham Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 29 April 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 October 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to address the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- analyse and evaluate the impact of your actions more thoroughly against the progress that pupils are making
- ensure that leaders at all levels follow the monitoring cycle so that you raise expectation and consistency in the quality of teaching
- hasten the pace of change in the early years so children acquire positive learning habits and achieve well.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The post-Ofsted action plan was evaluated along with the school's evaluation of its own performance. I visited most classes across the school to observe children learning. I looked at books to see the progress that pupils are making over time. The school's own information about pupils' progress was also considered. Safeguarding procedures and processes were discussed and the way the school carries out vetting procedures for new staff was examined.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been a number of significant changes. A new deputy headteacher started at the school in April 2016. There have been a number of teachers leave or take maternity leave, which has resulted in challenges with recruitment. You have successfully filled all the teaching positions through temporary and permanent appointments. In December 2015, a new chair of governors and vice-chair were appointed. You have also appointed new English and mathematics subject leaders.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors have correctly focused upon strengthening the leadership and recruiting teachers for the school. The appointment of a new deputy headteacher has increased your leadership capacity so school improvement can now accelerate. As senior leaders, you have written and regularly review a clear action plan that focuses on the areas identified in the inspection report. You have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement.
- Since the last inspection, you have implemented a programme of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. While teaching, learning and assessment are improving across the school, particularly in key stage 1, you are aware that too many inconsistencies still remain. The monitoring programme is not yet fully systematic and rigorous, and as a result teaching, learning and assessment continue to require improvement.
- You have appointed a new mathematics leader and provided staff with effective training on meeting the pupils' individual needs in lessons. The impact of this training is yet to be fully realised as it is inconsistently applied by the adults. Consequently, in some year groups, particularly in key stage 2, pupils do not have enough opportunity to grapple with and explore mathematical concepts so that they can make the progress of which they are capable.

- However, in English, the impact of your work is more evident. For example, in Year 3, pupils receive detailed feedback and are gaining confidence when explaining and justifying their written work. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are carefully catered for. These pupils are proud of their achievements and are making more progress as a result.
- In lessons where there is a greater precision on the planned learning, pupils speak positively about the changes in their lessons and how much they have learned. For example, you have introduced a new system for teaching reading across the school. In one lesson, a pupil confidently explained how the reading system worked, how much he had achieved so far this year and his aims and targets for the final term. In reading, the most-able pupils are making better progress because of the targeted approach to teaching.
- Governors have acted on the findings of their external review and have wasted no time in writing their own action plan. They have brokered the support of the local authority to assist in providing the necessary training, challenge and support for school improvement. I know this is something that you value. Governors willingly seek additional training so that they can be even more effective in their roles and responsibilities.
- You continue to place a high priority on creating and maintaining a culture of safeguarding pupils. The governors have revised policies and practices so that all statutory duties are met. As leaders, you ensure that records of staff recruitment checks are well ordered and fully compliant.
- As school leaders, you are aware that improvements in the early years provision are not happening as quickly as you would wish. This is despite the external support that you have accessed. Appropriate plans are in place for the new deputy headteacher to provide intensive support so that the pace of change quickens and sustains. In Reception, children respond well to adults. They are articulate for their age and are very keen to learn. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to develop strong and positive habits for learning through being independent and taking risks, particularly outside. The outdoor area is substantial but is not as effectively utilised as the outdoor classroom space that you would like it to be.

External support

You are brokering support through the local authority, through the Norfolk Better to Best programme and have also attended Ofsted's Getting to Good training. Since the last inspection, a full health and safety audit has been carried out by external advisers. Leaders and governors are responding well to the advice given and actions are having a greater impact as a result.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector