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Robin Turner
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Dear Mr Turner

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dereham, Toftwood Community Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 1 July 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in July 2015, 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 you, the mathematics leader, the literacy leader, the current and new special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), a group of pupils, the chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last monitoring inspection, and the local leader of education who is working with the school. The mathematics leader and I observed teaching and learning in mathematics in a sample of classes. I scrutinised the provision for pupils with special educational needs and the SENCOs took me to see how pupils' needs are being met in lessons. The literacy leader and I scrutinised pupils' writing in Years 3, 4 and 6.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, a teacher has returned from maternity leave for two days a week, a newly qualified teacher has been appointed and a new SENCo takes over in September.

Main findings

You, senior leaders, staff and governors have embraced the outcomes of the previous monitoring inspection. There has been a stringent and determined focus on improving pupil outcomes. As a result, it is clear from pupils' work that standards in writing and mathematics are improving. The school's own assessment information for the current Year 6 pupils indicates that attainment is likely to be better than last year.

You have introduced strong systems for monitoring the quality of teaching. For example, the non-negotiables for pupils' writing are having a powerful impact on improving the presentation and content of pupils' work. Pupils really like the 'pen licence' because they can see how their handwriting is improving over time and consequently they deserve the new pen which is presented in the whole-school celebration assembly. The deputy headteacher has given good support to teachers through daily drop-ins to classes. The constructive feedback she gives enables teachers to improve how they teach.

You have strengthened middle leaders by giving them the time and the authority to improve pupil outcomes in their subjects. The literacy and mathematics leaders understand how to check the quality of teaching and learning and can identify how they have improved.

You and the governors have chosen to work solely with one national leader of education. You and the staff have gained a great deal from your visits to his school and his visits to your school. As a result of this highly focused support, you are not trying to do too much at once. Furthermore, you are better able to evaluate initiatives and only take on new approaches that will improve pupil outcomes. Pupils talk confidently and enthusiastically about recent improvements. They are no longer confused by too many approaches to learning. They like knowing what they are going to learn in lessons and understand what good learning looks like. They like being able to check their work against the list of characteristics teachers give them.

Governors are making regular visits to the school and are holding you to account for making sure the school improvement plan is put into effect.

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 giving good support to the school through organising the connection with the outstanding school. They have also brokered support from a local leader of education. He regularly visits the school and has supported improvements in subject leadership and the work of teaching assistants.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector