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Luke Whitney
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Whitney

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Gedney Church End Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 September 2014, 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 2014. 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, the Chair of Governors, and a telephone discussion was held with representative of the local authority. I toured the school, visiting all classrooms and holding discussions with pupils. I looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including information relating to the performance management of the staff, reports from monitoring activities carried out by senior leaders, subject action plans, and a report for the governors on the pupils' test and assessment results in 2014. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Documents relating to safeguarding were also checked.

Context

The school is federated with another nearby primary school. Both schools have the same headteacher and governing body. The schools were inspected separately, but at the same time in June 2014 and both were judged to require improvement in order to become good, or outstanding. The monitoring inspector visited both schools in the federation on the same day.

Main findings

You and the governing body are taking a coherent and coordinated approach to improving the quality of teaching at both schools in the federation. The pupils' achievement is beginning to improve, as a result of those efforts. You have, rightly, made improving the quality of teaching a priority. That is now evident in a revised approach to managing the performance of the staff.

You have introduced more-frequent checks, for example, on the quality of the teachers' marking. You are providing the teachers with clear and detailed comments about what has been done well and what needs to be improved.

The pupils are getting more opportunities to respond to the teachers' marking. They have a reasonable understanding of most of the comments the teachers have written, although I saw examples of comments that were not helpful to the pupils. Nevertheless, the improvements that have been made are helping the pupils to understand better how to improve their work.

You have increased the emphasis on providing appropriately challenging work for the pupils and are checking to see how well the teachers are planning for this. The pupils find the range of topics that they study and the experiences they get stimulating. It was apparent, however, that the level of challenge provided to the pupils is not yet convincingly high.

You are beginning to involve subject leaders more in improving the work of the school. They are responding well to the enhanced responsibilities, but are still at an early stage of development, in terms of having an impact on the work of the school.

The joint school improvement plan, which covers both schools in the federation, has some merits. It is, rightly, focussed strongly on raising the achievement of the pupils and includes a comprehensive range of measures for checking that. The plan was updated after the recent inspections, so that it now includes the areas for improvement noted in the inspection reports. It does not always make clear, however, exactly what the actions the school intends to take are and who is responsible for ensuring that they are carried out.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You have increased the extent of joint working involving each of the schools within the federation. That is helping to improve practice in both schools. You are actively using a pre-existing partnership with several other local schools, which is providing you with a source of good practice to support your own improvement initiatives.

The school and the governing body have received effective support from the local authority, although a very recent change in personnel means that there is not currently a plan for how you will use the support from now on; you were due to begin discussions about that at the time of my visit.

The federation is experiencing considerable difficulty in recruiting for senior leadership posts. There is no obvious source of assistance currently with that potential barrier to the schools' rapid improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss

Her Majesty's Inspector