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Headteacher
Stedham Primary School
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West Sussex
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Dear Mrs Dreckmann

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Stedham Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Tuesday 18 December, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Chair of Governors, a representative of the local authority, the English subject leader, teaching staff, and pupils from Years 5 and 6. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and the school's review of progress on the issues identified at the last inspection. I looked at reports from the local authority advisor, minutes of governors' meetings, and examples of curriculum planning.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection, a change has been made to teaching in the combined Year 1/Year 2 class, which is now taught by a single teacher rather than by two. Two new governors have joined the governing body: a parent and a community representative. A vacancy still exists for a local authority governor.

Main findings

The school improvement plan you have drawn up with guidance from the local authority advisor presents a clear, ambitious and well-structured response to the areas for improvement. Each line of action has a realistic target date for completion; those responsible for leading it are identified; and the expected impact is described, against which progress will be measured. Where the person responsible for a line of action is also responsible for judging its success or where monitoring is undertaken by governors, who do not as yet have the breadth and depth of knowledge needed, the robustness of this monitoring is open to question. The improvement plan focuses, appropriately, on developing the ability of subject leaders to promote and monitor progress in their areas, and on ensuring that all teachers are accurate in their judgements about pupils' standards and rates of progress.

Recently, staffing issues have taken up much of your time, which has inevitably affected the pace at which you been able to drive improvement. While your commitment and leadership skills are clearly strong, you are currently carrying more key responsibilities than can be sensibly sustained over time – including subject leadership of mathematics and management of support for pupils needing additional help.

As recommended at the last inspection, governors have begun work with an external advisor, to review their current practice and to develop the knowledge and skills needed to present constructive challenge to the school's leaders, to monitor the quality of teaching and to evaluate pupils' progress.

In summary, senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- strengthen governors' effectiveness as 'critical friends', by ensuring that they have a clear and viable strategic plan for the school's development and are equipped to challenge as well as support the school's leaders, especially with regard to the impact of teaching on pupils' progress
- ensure that the school's leaders are able to extend their experience and develop their own skills through productive links with other schools
- use accurate and regularly updated analysis of pupils' progress when planning lessons, so that all pupils are appropriately challenged
- ensure that feedback to teachers after lesson observations is detailed and practical and sets priorities for further training or support.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority provides regular support through reports on the school's progress and through well-targeted guidance and training. In addition, the school has support from successful schools in the locality.

To strengthen the implementation of the school's action plan, the likely pattern of further Ofsted intervention will include:

- support for the head teacher and subject leaders in strengthening teaching and learning, with a particular focus on effective planning and on accurate and constructive feedback to pupils
- lesson observations and discussion with teachers
- guidance for governors in developing the knowledge and skills needed to challenge as well as support the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector