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Mr Michael Snelson
Rectory Farm Primary School
Olden Road
Rectory Farm
Northampton
NN3 5DD

Dear Mr Snelson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rectory Farm Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with you and members of your senior leadership team, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body. The school improvement plan was evaluated and I conducted a learning walk. I also looked at current assessment data and pupils' English books.

Context

One member of staff has left the school since the inspection. The school have recruited two experienced teachers who will take up post in September 2013.

Main findings

The school improvement plan is not focused on eliminating the issues raised at the time of the last inspection; it does not clearly identify key priorities for improvement. There are limited activities to improve the quality of teaching and as a result there is

a lack of direction for teachers. It is not clear when teachers are expected to implement new initiatives therefore it is difficult for leaders to hold teachers to account. You need to rewrite the improvement plan as a matter of urgency, clearly identifying the actions you will take to improve the quality of teaching.

Records of teaching observations show that senior leaders do not take account of the progress made by pupils when evaluating the quality of teaching. Teachers are not set specific targets to improve; as a result teaching is not improving quickly enough. The leadership team have recently delivered training on questioning and effective marking. It is unclear what impact this has made as there are no formal evaluations of how the new initiatives are improving the quality of teaching.

A new marking policy has been introduced which focuses on pupils being given targets to improve their work. This has led to very recent improvements in marking. There are examples where pupils are beginning to act on the advice given and are improving their work. You need to ensure that the marking policy is consistently applied in all classes.

Governors have not checked the work of the leadership team closely enough, for example the lack of a clear strategic plan should have been identified earlier. They have recently conducted a number of focused visits in order to gain more first-hand evidence; governors now have a clearer view of strengths and weaknesses. Governors have written a sound action plan to improve their effectiveness. They need to ensure the additional training and recommendations from the upcoming review of governance enable them to hold senior leaders to account more effectively.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action by 1st July 2013 to:

- Write a strategic improvement plan detailing how the quality of teaching will improve.
- Ensure all teachers have targets which will improve their teaching..
- Improve the quality of teaching observations by focusing on the rate of pupil progress.
- Ensure that regular monitoring takes place so that immediate action can be taken to address inconsistencies.

The school will send HMI the revised improvement plan by 1st July 2013.

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

External support

The local authority identified issues within the school prior to the inspection; they had raised concerns with the leadership team and governing body. Since the inspection the local authority have provided good support to the school. Focused support has strengthened provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority has met with governors and has agreed to provide further training.

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

Yours sincerely

Wayne Norrie
Her Majesty's Inspector