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Mrs Liz Bird
Executive Headteacher
Eythorne Elvington Community Primary School
Adelaide Road
Eythorne
Kent
CT15 4AN

Dear Mrs Bird

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Eythorne Elvington Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 September 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- identify features of good lessons and sequences of lessons, so staff are clearer about what is expected
- develop classroom displays and use resources more effectively so that they benefit pupils in lessons
- develop the role of subject leaders so they know the part they play in improving the school
- increase the involvement of the Executive Headteacher to ensure staff clearly understand what they are supposed to be doing to improve the school and that the actions taken are checked by the school's leaders, including the governors.

- make more use of expertise about teaching and learning among staff in the school, the federation and other local schools judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding' to help teachers to develop.

Evidence

During the visit I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, the newly appointed subject leader for English, three governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan and Governing Body action plan. I visited each classroom to see the school at work, spoke to pupils about their lessons and looked at the work in their books.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection a new teacher has been appointed for the Reception class.

Main findings

As Executive Headteacher you have a good understanding of the school's priorities and have quickly put an action plan in place to address these. Work to make improvements has started but the impact has been limited. You have shared the action plan with staff so they know what needs to be done, but they need more training to help them make the necessary changes. The school is federated with another school, which you also lead, and you are currently in school only one and a half days per week. This is not enough because when you are not in the drive for improvement lacks urgency. The Head of School is currently over-reliant on you to drive improvement and make sure initiatives are followed through.

Teaching is still not consistently good because teachers are not all clear enough exactly what features you expect to see as a regular part of lessons. For example, some teachers do not show pupils well enough what they need to do and how to do it. However there is some good practice at Eythorne Elvington. As you know we saw some effective marking where pupils had been shown clearly what their teacher expected. These pupils were fully engaged in checking how well they had done and agreeing the next steps with their teacher. Your work with staff needs to ensure this is true in all classes. We discussed how visits to other schools will help teachers to improve their teaching.

Some training has rightly taken place to improve support for learners by developing displays in each classroom. Teachers have made a start with this work, for example each class now has a 'working wall' in place. However these do not use pupils' ideas and examples of their work effectively enough to be helpful. When in school you have checked their use but this has not been followed up well enough by the Head

of School to ensure all staff see the importance of these. The school has a good range of books and other resources such as interactive whiteboards to support learning, but teachers do not make full enough use of these to engage pupils and help them become independent learners.

Subject leaders have only recently been appointed to their roles. They are not sure exactly what you expect of them. They have not checked what needs to be done in their subject and do not have their own detailed action plans for their subjects. You have planned training for them to be confident to lead improvements and ensure they are effective, but this has not yet taken place.

Staff have taken positive steps to improve pupils' skills in speaking and listening. We saw older pupils being encouraged to answer questions fully in a mathematics lesson, deepening their understanding. Younger pupils are taking turns to make a presentation to the class and could explain this is important, 'so people can listen better.' These developments are at an early stage but give you the building blocks for improvement.

Governors have a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. They understand how to question you and other leaders effectively to help to develop the school, but need to check that more impact is being made. They are using local authority funding well, for example to support planned subject leader training. Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils (pupil premium) is being carefully targeted to raise standards, although the impact has yet to be seen.

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

Support from the local authority is rightly targeted at improving teaching. The school's advisor has carried out lesson observations to help improve teaching which the Executive Headteacher has found helpful. It is too early for this work to have shown impact. Although adviser time is allocated to the school, dates have not yet been set for further work, which makes it hard for the school's leaders to plan ahead. The school should access additional support from other schools, to help teachers to develop their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard
Her Majesty's Inspector