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Katherine Milk
Headteacher
Edgar Sewter Community Primary School
Norwich Road
Halesworth
Suffolk
IP19 8BU

Dear Miss Milk

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Edgar Sewter Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 December 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 May 2013. 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. The school should take further action to:

- Raise teachers' expectations so that all pupils are challenged.
- Disseminate the strong teaching, especially that seen in Years 4, 5, and 6, to the whole school.
- Ensure that pupils develop skills of independent learning and problem-solving by consistently allowing these skills to be developed in all classes.
- Modify the lesson observation system so that instances of insufficiently challenging teaching are identified and acted on.
- Ensure that governors record meetings in such a way that decisions and targets are accurately recorded so that progress towards them can be easily monitored.

Evidence

During the visit I had meetings with you, the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated. We made short visits to 10 classes covering all year groups in order to evaluate learning.

Context

You are new in post, and joined the school after the last inspection. The Year 6 cohort that has just left the school was the first, the school having been part of the reorganisation of Suffolk from a three-tier to a two-tier school system.

Main findings

Since the last inspection the results of the 2013 national tests have been released. These show a weak picture of pupils entering the school with prior attainment that is around average but leaving with attainment that is below expectations. This constitutes weak progress. Writing is particularly weak in both key stages.

Trends and gaps in performance for those pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium cannot be determined because the numbers are small and there is no trend data. The gap between the progress and attainment of boys and girls is about average in Key Stage 1 but widens in Key Stage 2. Overall, pupils leave Key Stage 2 behind where they should be. However the gap is closing because teaching is improving.

In a significant proportion of lessons, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently and expectations are too low. This is especially the case at Key Stage 1. In these classes the emphasis is on tasks and activities that rarely challenge all those present, and some pupils become bored. Too much emphasis is sometimes placed on what pupils are doing rather than learning. They are very slow to develop skills of independent learning in this situation. Towards the end of Key Stage 2, teachers challenge the whole class more, often at levels above those that would be expected for their age. Skills of independent learning develop well in these classes and progress accelerates.

You have made significant changes, although it is too soon to see an impact in attainment data. Teachers now assess progress and attainment systematically. This assessment is accurate, and is beginning to give a picture of where the weaknesses are in the school, and how both individuals and groups of pupils are doing. Lesson planning has improved. The best of these plans are brief and simple, allowing flexibility for the teacher to slow down or speed up so that no pupils are left behind.

For the first time in the school you have included more rigorous targets for pupils' attainment into the management of teachers' performance. Progress towards these targets is closely monitored. Teaching has begun to improve. Roles have been clarified and teachers made accountable for the performance of their pupils. The school's lesson observation system is accurate, but sometimes misses when lessons

are being taught at a level that is too low to challenge all pupils. The school's development plan is accurate and you and senior colleagues have a good view of the weaknesses and strengths of the school.

Governors have offered good support to the school during a time of changes to senior management. They bring many strengths to their role including the evaluation of school performance data. Their meetings are challenging with a determination to improve the school. Sometimes this challenge is not recorded with sufficient precision however. This means that the monitoring of progress towards set targets is difficult

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

In addition to independent consultancy, the school has taken advantage of the local authority's 'raising the bar' programme. Various support measures are planned, including for the development of literacy.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector