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Mrs Rosemary Kett
Interim Executive Headteacher
Surlingham Community Primary School
Three Rivers Federation
Walnut Hill
Surlingham
Norfolk
NR14 7DQ

Dear Mrs Kett

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit to Surlingham Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 September 2015, 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 April 2015. 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 in order to become a good school. You should take further action to:

- ensure that plans to supplement teaching and sustain the improvements in pupils' achievement where there have been changes in staffing are rapidly implemented.

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, three governors including the Chair, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and the mathematics subject leader. I also met with a representative of the teaching school alliance that you are working with and an adviser from the local authority. We spent time in the three classes, talked to pupils about their learning and scrutinised their books. I

evaluated your action plan, and we discussed leaders' analysis of how effectively teaching and achievement are improving. I met with 11 parents to discuss their perceptions of how well you are addressing the points identified for improvement at the last inspection.

Context

The substantive headteacher remains absent and you are continuing in the role of executive headteacher across the two schools in the Three Rivers Federation. This is currently for an allocated time of three days a week. Three teachers have left the school and two new teachers have been appointed. Five new governors have joined the federation governing body and you have restructured the team of support staff.

Main findings

Parents say that you have improved communication with them, that they have increased confidence in the school's work and that in some year groups, their children are receiving greater challenge to improve their achievement. They say the recent 'meet the teacher' events were useful in keeping them informed about the school's work. Both parents and staff expressed concerns about the uncertainty caused by the continuing absence of the substantive headteacher. Although it is evident that governors and the local authority are taking appropriate action to address this, parents know your appointment as a local authority headteacher is not permanent and they expressed concern that the leadership of the school remains vulnerable to continuing change.

Working closely with the deputy headteacher, you have continued to both challenge and support teachers to improve their practice. This has resulted in some changes in staffing and you have implemented plans to ensure that the expectations set for all teachers across the federation are quickly realised. In some instances, this has meant that extra support is needed and you have put plans in place to ensure that this happens. The deputy headteacher has developed greater rigour in the quality of her work to improve teaching and raise achievement in English. Professional development opportunities have been carefully planned to make sure that teachers receive the training they need to address the most important priorities for improvement.

The mathematics and early years leaders are receiving good support to fulfil their roles. They understand the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement and show a secure knowledge of the areas for which they hold responsibility. Analysis of the quality of their teaching shows that they have the capacity to support others to improve.

Feedback given to pupils about the quality of their work is improving; a particularly strong feature of this is the discussion that takes place between teachers and pupils during lessons. Many pupils explained very clearly how this is the approach that

helps them most because it means that they understand how to improve their work well. Work is marked regularly and in accordance with the school's policy. We saw a number of lessons in which the ideas pupils were given excited them to want to write them down in a range of different ways. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 lesson, pupils were working hard to write a letter in role as a 'lighthouse inspector'. These pupils worked with concentration and paid close attention to the detail of their work. They tried hard to spell the words correctly and demonstrated a good understanding of how to make their work better. Older pupils, affected by historical changes in staffing, still have some ground to make up to reach the standards expected for their age and ability. They were, however, working with commitment and in the majority of instances were well supported to improve their skills.

There have been substantial changes in the membership of the governing body. New governors have a range of skills and experience and have identified how best they can use these to support the drive for improvement. Minutes of governing body meetings show that they now ask more challenging questions and are increasingly holding leaders to account for using resources appropriately; this includes the funding the school receives to enhance the learning of disadvantaged pupils. At times, governors have not challenged leaders' responses to their questions rigorously enough. Although governors are monitoring the work of the school very regularly, they have not specifically focused their visits and the follow up to these on the most important improvement priorities. An adviser from the local teaching school alliance has started to work with governors to support addressing these aspects of their responsibilities.

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

External support

The local authority has provided effective support by continuing to allocate you as interim executive headteacher to the school, which is ensuring improvement priorities are addressed. Advisers have also brokered the support of the local teaching school alliance which has facilitated the improvement of teaching well. Early years and mathematics adviser support has helped leaders develop their capacity to improve provision.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector