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Mr J Peate
Headteacher
East Huntspill School
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Dear Mr Peate

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to East Huntspill School

Following my visit to your school on 2 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 September 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:

- improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - there is a greater focus on pupil's mathematical understanding and development throughout the curriculum
 - teachers are helped to become more reflective about the impact of their teaching on the progress that pupils make during each lesson. This could be done for example by using video recording and then evaluating what pupils have gained in their learning
 - the best teaching practice is fully shared across both schools
- improve leadership and management by ensuring that:

- the duplication of activities that are peripheral to pupils' learning, such as having two Christmas fairs, are reduced
- the governing body firmly holds teachers to account for the progress that pupils make in their lessons
- the governor with responsibility for safeguarding has tier three training at the earliest opportunity
- greater attention is paid to succession planning for leadership and management roles in both schools
- there is a specific governor with responsibility for pupils who are entitled to the pupil premium and for those pupils who are gifted and/or talented
- there are 'short termly' measurable milestones for each action point in the school's and the governing bodies action and improvement plans so that:
 - o all leaders, managers and the governing body are held firmly to account for their area(s) of responsibility
 - o the documents are used to regularly measure the achievement of pupils and the progress that the school is making towards providing a good or better quality of education.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Chair of the Governing Body another governor, and a local leader for education (as the representative of the local authority) to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement and governing body's action plan were evaluated. During my visit I had further meetings with you and we undertook a learning walk together. I also met staff, looked at attendance records and scrutinised various meeting notes and policies.

Context

For the most part East and West Huntspill schools are effectively one school operating on two sites. There is one headteacher and one governing body. There is a single action and improvement plan that covers the areas required for improvement for both schools. Planning is shared across both schools, moderation is conducted jointly and there are single coordinators for literacy and numeracy who work across both schools.

Main findings

Since the last inspection the West and East Huntspill schools are working even more closely together. You have rightly continued to reduce the amount of duplication across the two schools. This has helped to increase the consistency in planning and raised teachers' expectations of pupils as planning now shows extension activities for the more-able pupils.

The last section 5 inspection found that the curriculum at East Huntspill needed to be broader. Through the joint work with West Huntspill it is now providing richer opportunities for pupils to develop and apply what they have learned in literacy lessons in meaningful ways in other lessons. For example, humanities lessons are seen less as a 'filler' activity with a greater emphasis on developing pupils' writing skills. You recognise that this should now be extended to include more opportunities for the exploration and use of mathematics in other subjects. We also discussed how the best teaching and learning across both schools needs to be shared more and considered the possible use of video recording to do this in order to aid teachers to reflect on what pupils had learned during each lesson.

Duplication of social and community activities remain, such as two Christmas Fairs and church services. Although there is one governing body, there are separate 'parent and teacher associations' and 'friends associations' for each school. This amount of duplication severely reduces the time and energy that you can spend on strategic leadership. It hampers and restricts your ability to ensure both schools improve and thereby provide a good or better education at the earliest opportunity.

The single school improvement plan has a good focus on the common areas for improvement in each school and the couple of specific areas for each that were reported on at the last section 5 inspection. As part of this plan, you have established a set of non-negotiable expectations through a set of 'corporate' policies and practices. To be more effective the plan needs to be sharpened to make it clear to staff exactly what is expected of them over each 'short term'. In particular they need to be able to relate and cross-reference it directly to pupils' progress and attainment. Also, the school's coordinators along with the governing body need to ensure that their action plans link into it.

The governing body has learned from the external review and made appropriate changes to their organisation. At present the school does not have designated governors with responsibility to monitor the outcomes for pupils entitled to the pupil premium and for those pupils who are gifted and/or talented. Governors need to ensure that the contribution each teacher makes to raising attainment and increasing pupils' progress is reflected clearly in performance targets and the current appraisal process. They also need to pay more attention to the succession planning for leadership and management roles within the two schools.

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

You are getting good external support from a local leader of education. As the headteacher of a good school she has been able to support you to make changes and is effectively monitoring the actions that have been taken. The governing body commissioned an external review to identify where improvement was required. The

information in the written report of this review is informative and helpful. However, the plan produced following the review requires improvement. We discussed that any plan need to have quantifiable milestones, especially for those actions that will be on-going, and to ensure that all leaders and the governing body are held fully to account for their areas of responsibility.

Governors have received some training to support their professional development but need more. In particular, the governor with responsibility for safeguarding should have the higher level training in safeguarding.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector