

Serco Inspections
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0121 679 9165
Direct email: victoria.mortimore2@serco.com

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Mr Luke Whitney
Headteacher
Lutton St Nicholas Primary School
Lutton
Spalding
PE12 9HN

Dear Mr Whitney

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Gedney Church End and Lutton St Nicholas Primary Schools, Lincolnshire local authority.

Following my visit to your schools on 18 and 19 April 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on my 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 schools since the most recent section 5 inspection.

This was the first monitoring inspection since both schools were judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection on 23-24 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, subject coordinators, the Chair of the Governing Body, two representatives of the local authority and pupils in both schools. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A review of some of the schools' progress in improving assessment in the early years, marking and monitoring was undertaken. Both school sites were toured, during which other teachers and support staff were introduced. In addition, it was possible to attend a governing body training session on the evening of 18 April. During this meeting, the local authority consultants provided activities to support governing body development, following their external review of governance conducted in March 2013.

Context

A member of the school's leadership team has just begun her maternity leave and her class is now being taught by a temporary replacement. Another teacher is temporarily taking on some of her additional responsibilities. Two additional pupils have joined Gedney Church End, and one pupil has left Lutton St Nicholas.

Main findings

The governing body currently has five vacancies and urgently requires additional expertise to build its capacity for long-term strategic decision making. Governors have arranged and completed a review of governance and have undertaken training in monitoring. They have also undertaken a skills audit, but have not yet had the opportunity to use this to help identify suitable new recruits to fill the vacant posts.

Subject leaders are developing their skills in leading and monitoring their areas of responsibility. They have conducted lesson observations jointly with the headteacher and, with varying frequency, monitored the planning of other teachers. They have also undertaken scrutiny of pupils' work in their subjects and begun to use the schools' effective progress-tracking data, to assess pupils' progress in their subjects. They are developing their understanding of their accountability for the whole-school outcomes in their subjects.

There is some evidence that overall rates of progress are slowly improving. This is partly due to the effective tracking of pupils' achievement and the one-to-one intervention programme. Some good progress has been made in the transition to using the new national statements for assessing children's expected development in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A revised marking policy introduced just prior to the inspection is being more consistently used and overall marking is improving. Further development is required, however, to ensure that pupils act on the advice that teachers give when they mark work. Although the school improvement plan is thorough in addressing the issues raised by the inspection, much greater clarity and sharpness of focus is necessary on the key issue of improving the quality of teaching, if the school is to make the rapid improvement required.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- rewrite the section of the school improvement plan relating to the quality of teaching, to enable all teachers to make progress improving their practice in the areas outlined in the inspection report
- use the schools' planned monitoring activities to measure the improvement in teaching and to inform the performance management of teachers
- refine monitoring activities to be less descriptive and have more impact in driving improvement

- seek to recruit governors who can fill the skills and knowledge gaps identified in the recent skills audit
- make rapid progress in building collaborative links with other nearby schools to support leadership, management and the development of teaching and learning.

HMI will provide additional support by:

- supporting the rewriting of the 'quality of teaching' section of the school improvement plan
- inviting subject leaders for English and mathematics to attend an Ofsted 'Better English and maths' conference
- revisit the school in the autumn term of 2013 to support subject leaders in becoming more effective at monitoring their area of responsibility, with a focus on delivering developmental feedback to others.

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

External support

The school has made very good use of most of the support offered by CfBT on behalf of the local authority, although there was some initial reluctance to take advantage of funding offered to support collaborative partnerships. A recent change in the school improvement professional working with the school has broken continuity, but the school will still receive a high priority of support from Lincolnshire. Most recently, the support used by the school has been to strengthen subject leadership and conduct the review of governance. Two teachers are engaged in the 'Developing Teacher' programme run by CfBT and one subject leader is on the 'Growing into Leadership' course.

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

Yours sincerely

John Peckham
Her Majesty's Inspector