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18 December 2012

Andrew Sheppard
Redcastle Family School
St Martin's Way
Thetford
IP24 3PU

Dear Mr Sheppard

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Redcastle Family School

Following my visit to your school on 18 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 11 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated together with lesson observation records, details of governors meetings, and assessment monitoring records. In addition, HMI visited all of the school's classes to observe pupils' learning.

Context

There have been no significant changes in context since the last inspection.

Main findings

The school has made significant progress in enabling teaching to improve and to become more consistent. Assessment is now used systematically in all classes to monitor the attainment and progress both of groups and of individuals. This information is now used effectively to enable the school to evaluate its own

performance, and to monitor the progress made by groups of pupils. For individual pupils, assessment enables effective support to be given where a need is identified. However it is not always used to identify the most able so that they can be challenged to achieve their best. In a few classes the level is pitched too low for these pupils. Across the school however, pupils have a well-developed appetite for learning and enjoy their work. Many have developed good skills of independent learning especially in years 5 and 6.

The school's post-inspection development plan is concise and clear. The headteacher and senior leaders have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve. Actions relate well to the issues identified at the inspection. Some targets have already been met. For example new computer software packages now enable comprehensive analysis of assessment data, and learning material to support writing is now used throughout the school.

The school's lesson observation system is well-designed. It gives clear indications of aspects of teaching that need to be improved, and these are translated well into actions for the teacher. It identifies good practice well, and the school shares this by allowing teachers to observe each other. It pays appropriate attention to pupils' learning but sometimes misses opportunities to evaluate how well different groups within each class are learning, for example how effectively the most able are challenged.

Governors support the school well but recognise that this is not matched by the challenge they give. In particular, they have been too dependent on information and analyses provided by the school. This makes it difficult for them to independently set and monitor progress towards challenging targets. Governors recognise the need to undertake training in the evaluation of school performance data.

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

- Ensure that governors undertake training in the evaluation of school performance and its use in monitoring progress towards targets.
- Devise systems to challenge the most able in class and ensure that their progress is effectively monitored by governors.

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

External support

The school has taken advantage of local authority support in lesson observations, and in aspects of literacy and numeracy. This has helped to improve the school in these areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector