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Ms Julie Davey & Ms Jill Thewlis
Joint acting headteachers
Salmestone Primary School
College Road
Margate
CT9 4DB

Dear Ms Davey and Ms Thewlis,

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Salmestone Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 5 November 2014, 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and the proprietor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- secure the future stability and effectiveness of the academy's governance arrangements.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) regional director and her team, an executive governor and other senior leaders, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. You led me on a tour of the academy and I evaluated a range of documents including the academy's action plan. I examined some information about pupils' achievements for this year and results from the 2014 national tests.

Context

Half the teaching staff have left and been replaced. The governing body was suspended on 17 July 2014 and replaced with an Interim Executive Board (IEB). The IEB has had one meeting this year. The headteachers continue in part-time acting capacities. One of them is also headteacher of a school in London, and one is an educational consultant.

Main findings

You have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement. You have set clear guidance about the professional standards you expect from teachers. A new team of senior leaders are focused rightly on improving teaching. They have arranged good quality training for class teachers. Senior leaders are checking the work of all teachers regularly now, so that any weak performance is noticed quickly and corrected. They do this by regularly observing lessons, thoroughly checking marking and carefully comparing pupils' work with others of the same age locally. All leaders have begun to check the impact this is having on pupils' learning. They visit lessons every day. Leaders are more frequently observing lessons with a special focus, for example, how well mathematics is being taught. As a result teaching is improving and the rate of pupils' progress is starting to increase.

Subject leaders for mathematics and English have made a robust assessment of what each pupil knows, understands and can do. They are now working skilfully with teachers to fill the gaps left by past underachievement. Leaders at all levels have worked together to set ambitious targets for pupils in all years. Teachers are now providing tasks for pupils to improve their writing and make better use of their number skills in other subjects. Consequently, pupils' achievement is beginning to rise. New teachers are enriching pupils' learning by providing topic work drawn from wider subject knowledge and experience. For example, pupils are learning about other parts of the world and reading from a broader range of books.

Senior leaders have acted decisively to improve pupils' behaviour. The Inclusions Manager has developed recently a good system for recording and analysing patterns of poor behaviour and the steps taken to correct it. You have used a full range of actions to challenge poor conduct. You have also ensured that all teachers use the same system of rewards. This means that pupils are now proud of themselves when they behave well and receive praise. As a result, pupils appear happier in lessons and around the school and teachers are more able to concentrate on helping them learn. In September, senior leaders removed the 'Oasis' provision so that pupils are no longer taken out of lessons and waste learning time. Senior leaders are providing more support in lessons to help teachers manage pupils' behaviour and keep them in class. External services are being used well to provide specialist support for pupils with challenging behaviour.

The external review of governance recommended at the last inspection has not taken place. The academy's arrangements for governance are unusual as it is governed by the central TKAT IEB which oversees another academy locally. These arrangements are not sustainable if the long-term success of the academy is to be assured because the necessary time and skills for effective governance are spread too thinly. The IEB has appointed an executive governor who provides regular, consistent and constructive support to the leadership team. He provides reports on the academy's progress to the IEB. He is also providing detailed training for the existing governors, preparing them to be reinstated in January better able to carry out their duties. Additional governors are being recruited locally to strengthen and stabilise support for the academy as it strives for improvement. The current IEB does hold you robustly to account by requiring frequent information about pupils' progress and reports on improvements in teaching. They are also monitoring how well you are helping other senior leaders develop their management skills.

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

The academy receives effective support from the TKAT central team. For example, improvements to the early years have been led by one of the team. These improvements increasingly provide a good start for children's learning so that they enter Key Stage 1 better prepared than before. The team make good use of information about pupils' achievements to set priorities for improvement work. One of you arranged for teachers from your own school to work alongside staff in the academy. Staff from the academy have visited that school to look at its work and learn from its team. The academy and its partner school are working with the Institute of Education, London on a project to explore the impact of teaching. This gives the staff access to even greater expertise.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector