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Mrs Maxine Smart
Headteacher
South Elmsall Carlton Junior and Infant School
Carlton Road
South Elmsall
Pontefract
West Yorkshire
WF9 2QQ

Dear Mrs Smart

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to South Elmsall Carlton Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 29 November 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 September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, three members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. School documentation and monitoring information was reviewed.

Context

There have been a few changes in the context of the school since the last inspection. There is one vacancy for a teacher and a new member of staff has been recruited to take up post from January 2013. Two classes continue to be taught by temporary teachers and on the day of the visit one class was being taught by a supply teacher. In order that a substantive headteacher can be recruited the deputy headteacher has agreed to continue as the acting headteacher until she retires in August 2013. The recruitment process will begin for a third time in January 2013. There are two vacancies on the governing body for parent governors and the process to recruit replacements has very recently been initiated.

Main findings

The acting headteacher and senior leaders have enthusiastically begun to tackle the issues identified in the previous inspection report. A school improvement plan has been developed by the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. This identifies all of the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection and represents a well thought out plan for improvement. However, actions, timescales and responsibilities for implementation are not always specified. Consequently, the arrangements for checking on the implementation are not fully timetabled and do not identify how or who will do the checking.

Actions are being taken to mobilise the staff and a greater sense of urgency has been communicated by leaders. The school's own monitoring of teaching and learning shows some signs of improvements being made. However, there remain some pockets of inadequate teaching where improvements have not been secured. Some posts are covered by temporary staff. This and the fact that some of the developments, such as teachers supporting and helping one another, are new mean that improvements are fragile.

Some senior leaders are new into post or are in roles on an acting basis. Although they are very keen to make progress some are still at the early stages of their leadership careers and this remains a key focus for the school. Senior leaders do not routinely provide governors with reports related to their areas of responsibility.

Governors accept that there is much work to be done in order to secure improvement. They have requested support and advice from the local authority and some training is planned. They are aware of the challenges that the school faces, particularly with regard to recruiting a new substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher. They are about to advertise the headteacher vacancy for the third time. Although governors are beginning to be self-reflective about how they have worked in the past the shortcomings identified at the last inspection remain and an external review of governance is recommended.

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:

- Improve the school development plan so that it identifies more sharply the detailed actions, timescale and staff responsible for each improvement area.
- Improve the arrangements for monitoring by drawing up a detailed plan which identifies who, when and how checks will be made on the implementation of planned improvements.
- Address the small amount of inadequate teaching that has been identified through the school's own monitoring of teaching.
- Secure a permanent leadership team.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

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

External support

Senior leaders are engaging well with the local authority. Of note is the involvement of senior staff in the 'Securing Good' programme which is providing additional resources and training. The acting headteacher has welcomed the support that has been provided by the school's local authority officer during a period where she has taken on the responsibilities of headship. Three members of the leadership team are enrolled on a leadership development programme which is being run in partnership with a local secondary school.

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

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector