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Mrs Jennifer Moore
Headteacher
Skerton St Luke's CE VA Primary School
Slyne Road
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Lancashire
LA1 2JH

Dear Mrs Moore

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Skerton St Luke's CE VA Primary School

Following my visit with John Peckham, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 10 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, a senior leader with responsibility for mathematics and for teaching in Key Stage Two, two governors, a representative of the local authority and members of the school's pupil council. The school improvement plan was evaluated and the school's recent monitoring records were considered. In addition, the responses of 21 parents to Parent View were reviewed.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staffing since the recent inspection that judged the school to require improvement. A permanent teacher has been appointed to teach the Year 4 class from January 2013. Arrangements have been put in place for the Year 1 teacher to support the literacy coordinator on her forthcoming return to school.

Main findings

The school accepts that the outcomes of the previous inspection are the right ones, and had identified the key areas for improvement as a result of its own self-evaluation. The school improvement plan has been strengthened to focus explicitly on accelerating pupils' progress in all classes, particularly in lower Key Stage 2 where progress over time is slowest.

The school has set rigorous targets for all classes and has embarked on a programme of professional development to ensure that all teachers are able to support pupils' learning, especially in mathematics. Pupils' individual targets have been set and the school has established a clear monitoring and reporting process so that there is a regular check on how well all pupils are doing.

Senior leaders have responded with suitable urgency to strengthen teachers' planning and marking in order that all teachers' work is characterised by the same rigour as that of the most effective teachers in school. At present the outcomes of teaching observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, and the review of progress data are not always considered together. This means that the evaluation of teaching over time is not as strong as it might be. However, there are planned improvements to performance management so that pupils' progress over time and the outcomes of lesson observations will be reviewed together to give a comprehensive and accurate view of teachers' performance.

The literacy and numeracy co-ordinators have made a good start to raising standards in the areas for which they are responsible. The scrutiny of pupils' work is appropriately focused on these subjects.

Improvements to pupils' behaviour are being promoted through the 'values' programme that encourages pupils to behave respectfully towards each other and take responsibility for their actions. However, pupils report that there is poor behaviour in some lessons linked to work not being sufficiently interesting. Relatively few parents have chosen to express their opinions of the school using the online tool, Parent View. Of those who have responded, a significant proportion express some concerns, particularly regarding homework and the quality of behaviour. Survey data held by the school gives a more positive impression of parents' views.

Governors have clear insight on the work of the school, are ambitious for its future and are well-organised to fulfil their responsibilities. The standards and effectiveness committee reports regularly to the full governing body enabling key developments to be tracked and evaluated thoroughly.

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 recommend that further action is taken to:

- ensure that teaching observations are followed up by rigorous feedback, including areas for improvement that are carried forward, revisited and used as the basis for teachers' professional development
- make full use of Teachers' Standards in assessing the work of teachers
- encourage parents to use Parent View to register their feedback about the school
- develop the role of the school's pupil council in monitoring improvements in teaching and learning.

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

External support

The local authority provides effective support to the school. Since the inspection this support has been swiftly tailored to meet the school's most urgent needs, particularly with regard to the teaching of mathematics, through the deployment of a consultant who is working with the mathematics leader in school and is scheduled to provide specific training for staff.

Additional time has been provided by the school adviser. He has supported the headteacher and governors in strengthening the improvement plan and has provided training for governors to help them hold school leaders to account for pupils' progress. He has also supported the mathematics co-ordinator in ensuring that all teachers are assessing pupils' work to the same standard. The local authority has brokered the support of a high-performing school in another part of the county. The detailed planning for this work has still to be finalised but there is clear capacity for links to be made between post-holders at different levels in the two schools to galvanise improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and the Director of Education for Blackburn Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall

Her Majesty's Inspector