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15 January 2013

Mr I Chester
Headteacher
Nelson Castercliff Primary school
Marsden Hall Road North
Nelson
Lancashire
BB9 8JJ

Dear Mr Chester

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Nelson Castercliff Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 January 2013, 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 November 2012. This visit was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, the inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders; members of the governing body; and a representative of the local authority. He evaluated the school's improvement plan and the schools' data showing pupils' attainment and progress.

Context

There have been no major changes since the inspection. A new parent governor has been appointed to the governing body.

Main findings

Senior leaders including governors have made a reasonable start in tackling the points for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The improvement plan identifies some clear actions to be taken by different staff. It is difficult to judge how successful the actions are in raising pupils' attainment however because the success criteria are written in a way which makes them difficult to measure.

The staff have implemented the planned improvements to the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and early reading. The improvements are already proving to be successful and pupils' reading has started to improve quickly. Teachers in Years 5 and 6 have, in their English lessons, put a greater focus on teaching grammar and punctuation. The senior leader in charge of English has started to make changes to the subject to make sure all staff are teaching grammar in the same way. Other leaders have made a start to increase the amount of written work pupils produce in subjects such as history and geography. The senior leader in charge of mathematics has made an appropriate start in raising pupils' skills and knowledge in using number, however more work needs to be done to improve pupils' problem solving skills.

Senior leaders have made some appropriate improvements to the way in which they check on the quality of teachers' lessons and pupils' achievement. They have for example introduced a clear link between observing a lesson, identifying exactly what each teacher needs to improve and linking this with training courses and professional development. Senior leaders now need to improve the way in which they make judgements about the quality of pupils' work.

Members of the governing body are effective in enabling and overseeing improvements in the school. They have allocated resources to the improvement in pupils' reading which has included a significant cost in teachers' time and professional development. They have also taken an active role in overseeing the changes and making sure they are effective in improving pupils' attainment.

Overall, 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:

- Revise the improvement plan so that governors, visitors and senior leaders are able to easily measure the success of the actions.
- Revise the way in which senior leaders monitor the quality of pupils' work.
- Implement the recommendations of Ofsted reports and surveys into mathematics to improve pupils' ability to solve problems in mathematics.

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

External support

The school is making effective use of support from the local authority and from a National Leader in Education. The support is helping senior leaders to revise and improve the school's systems of checking on the quality of teaching. The support is also helping teachers' to improve their teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.