

further improvement. Despite the associate headteacher only being in role a short time, she has been industrious and has put together an action plan which sets out a series of initiatives and specific actions linked to the key priorities for improvement identified by the section 5 inspection in November 2012. To this end a number of new procedures and practices have been introduced which are designed to provide pupils with a higher quality of education by: strengthening the impact of teaching; raising pupils' standards of attainment in English and mathematics and improving the effectiveness of leaders and managers. The action plan contains clear success criteria with measurable targets so that the progress the school is making in tackling the key priorities can be assessed objectively by the School Improvement Committee (which has local authority, governor and staff representation) that has been established to monitor and strategically influence the school's improvement.

Several of the planned actions are already underway, including, giving staff very specific training, advice and guidance to improve the effectiveness of their teaching, particularly in English and mathematics. This has included work with an advanced skills teacher from Long Toft Primary School and visits by staff to other schools to observe good and outstanding teaching and learning. There has also been a big focus on improving the quality of teacher's planning so it is consistently high quality, takes full account of pupils' specific needs and abilities, and is always challenging and pitched at the right level for them.

The associate headteacher has also concentrated on raising staff expectations of what pupils are capable of attaining. Assessment procedures are now more rigorous and consistent and a more accurate picture of exactly how well pupils are progressing has been established. The information derived from the new approach to assessment is being used to help plan the next steps in pupils' learning and/or provide additional support.

The school's efforts to embed and further enhance the curriculum are at an early stage of development with much work to do, although there was some evidence that pupils are developing their thinking skills, and are more actively involved in their own learning, and were more engaged as a result. Staff are being held more accountable for the quality of their work. Leadership responsibilities are being devolved more widely as the school looks to exploit the emerging leadership potential that exists. Generally, staff understand the vital part they have to play in securing whole-school improvements and recognise that they must more consistently adhere to and apply the school improvement policies and procedures.

The governing body has looked hard at itself since the section 5 inspection and has recognised that there is more it can do to strategically influence the school's further improvement. There is no doubting the commitment of key governors to the school's cause, but allied to this they have now added a cutting edge by introducing more effective methods to rigorously check how well the school is performing. They have also taken steps to involve themselves more directly and more regularly in shaping

the school's plans for the future. Through recent training and support from the local authority, governors are better-equipped to challenge as well as support the school. Consequently, they are less reliant on the headteacher for information and more discerning in evaluating what they are told. Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and are realistic about the level of challenge facing the school to improve the quality of education it offers. The governing body recognises it would benefit from the experience of a governor with a strong educational background.

Senior leaders and governors are taking some effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection, and their plans are well targeted at securing rapid improvement in every aspect of the areas for development improvement with the 'green shoots' of impact already visible in each of the key priority areas. However, the school is playing 'catch up' because its action planning and implementation of improvement measures got off to a sluggish start. Initial improvement plans for example, were superficial and lacked sufficient detail or coherence; little meaningful improvement work took place in the immediate aftermath of the last section 5 inspection. The more recent adjustments to the school's leadership have had a beneficial impact and there is widespread evidence of the influence of the current regime. A positive momentum is developing which the school's leaders understand must be sustained and built upon if the school is going to achieve the rapid improvement necessary to transform itself into a good or better school by the time of the next inspection.

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

External support

The local authority is providing effective assistance that is much appreciated by the school. It brokered the arrangement for the headteacher to receive leadership and management support from the associate headteacher. This partnership is resulting in the school benefitting from the advice and guidance of staff from the associate headteacher's school. This support is appropriately aimed at improving the quality of teaching, the use of assessment and curriculum. In addition, the senior school effectiveness advisor from the local authority is providing a good degree of professional advice, guidance and support, as well as monitoring and evaluating the school's progress in improving its overall effectiveness.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council.

Yours sincerely

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector