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Mr Douglas Hardie
Headteacher
Thomlinson Junior School
The Goose Market
High Street
Wigton
Cumbria
CA7 9PG

Dear Mr Hardie

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Thomlinson Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 21 February 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. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the Chair and one other member of the Governing Body and a group of pupils. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority. The school's development plan and monitoring file was also evaluated.

Context

There are no significant changes since the most recent inspection.

Main findings

Currently, the development plan does not provide a sharp enough focus on how the school is to improve in order to get to good. Moderation, intervention and target-setting strategies provide specific actions to support raising achievement in literacy, and especially in improving writing. There is, however, less clarity about how improvements are to be made to teaching in order to provide greater consistency across the school. Equally, there are few specific strategies to ensure monitoring is more rigorous or how this will link to specific training requirements for individual teachers. There is a clear desire to improve but, currently, the pace at which this is happening is too slow and lacks direction.

Monitoring of the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils is still not well established. It lacks the rigour needed to enable it to challenge weaker practice and identify where further support may be needed. A new lesson observation proforma linked closely to teachers' standards has been adopted. However, no observations have been carried out since the inspection. Very recently, a book scrutiny has taken place alongside some initial work on auditing the use of assessment for learning techniques. There is little evidence to show how these actions are currently able to provide an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning. This was an issue identified in the recent inspection and little progress has been achieved in developing this aspect of management. Recent and planned for training is more focussed on improving classroom practice but is not necessarily linked to the specific needs of individual teachers. There is no evidence for good practice being shared in a systematic way.

Governors have not challenged the current slow rate of progress. Although a school improvement group is established little has been done to evaluate the work of the school or hold management to account. Governors are supportive but are unclear about developments since the inspection or understand the need for greater urgency in putting improvements in place.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure that the development plan identifies and specifies precise actions, clear timescales and outcomes which are clearly aimed at improving teaching and learning and supporting consistent practice across the school
- ensure that monitoring is rigorous, focussed and is linked to specific improvement strategies and appropriate training and support
- make sure that school leaders, teachers and staff work with the local authority to implement the strategies identified in the school development plan in order to secure improvement and greater consistency in the quality of teaching, especially in Years 3 – 5
- involve all subject leaders in providing ideas, suggestions and resources to improve teaching in their areas of responsibility
- ensure that governors check that progress is being made against the action points in the school plan and hold those responsible to account.

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

External support

The local authority has provided limited support both prior to, and after, the inspection. Some work has been done to improve the assessment of pupil progress in mathematics and staff have attended a small number of courses provided locally. However, this has not been part of a focussed strategy to improve provision. The local authority adviser has also provided some advice on revising the post- inspection action plan and has agreed to broker support from a local primary school to share effective classroom practice and ideas.

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

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector