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10 June 2013

Mr Mark Lawn
Headteacher
Baldersby St James CE Primary School
Thirsk
North Yorkshire
YO7 4PT

Dear Mr Lawn

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Baldersby St James CE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school development plan was evaluated, documents relating to monitoring records and a sample of pupils' books were scrutinised.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement, two teachers have returned to school following illness and paternity leave.

Main findings

Since the inspection you have been working to address the key issues. Teachers are starting to implement the detailed presentation guidelines that you have developed and this is starting to clarify for staff and pupils the increased expectations that you

have about the quality of pupils' written work. The youngest pupils are starting to use them and the latest work in their books demonstrates that they are writing more frequently and taking greater care in forming letters. Governors know that more information in the form of useful questions and story sacks are helping some parents to support their children's reading and in particular younger children's understanding of what they are reading. Teachers give pupils specific feedback about their work and comments in their English books identify what has worked well and what needs to improve. This good practice has yet to extend to pupils work in mathematics. However, additional training and support to help teachers improve pupils' learning and progress in mathematics begins later this week. The expectation that pupils respond to the individual feedback they receive by writing responses to the questions teachers pose in their comments, or correcting spelling and grammatical errors in their books, are not established.

Governors are keen for the school to improve but they are not receiving the level of detail they need to enable them to evaluate the school's performance, or support and hold staff to account. Although some monitoring of teaching has taken place since the inspection it is not sharply identifying the impact that teaching is having on pupils' learning and progress or where improvement is required. The local authority's forthcoming programme of intensive support and the recent work to broker a partnership between this school and Dacre Braithwaite Primary school is clearly focused on helping to quicken the pace of improvement in this respect.

You have revised the school's development plan to include actions to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the inspection. Although this is guiding immediate activity it does not always identify clear success criteria and enough milestones to enable you to measure your progress, particularly in the short to medium term.

Senior leaders, governors and the local authority are starting to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- provide governors with regular, detailed updates about how teaching is improving and the aspects that would benefit from further development
- make some of the success criteria and targets in the school plan sharper so that staff and governors can clearly see the impact that activities are expected to have on improving pupils' learning and increasing their progress.

HMI discussed and agreed that the school will attend an Ofsted seminar later this term.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has developed a comprehensive plan and programme of support tailored to meet the school needs. Much of this has yet to begin. Resources have been allocated to provide focused, specialist support to assist the school in improving standards and pupils' progress and increasing the impact that leaders and managers have in driving improvements. Arrangements for a strategic partnership with an outstanding school are now in place following an initial delay.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector