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21 June 2013

Mrs M Pickles
Principal
Ackton Pastures Primary School
College Grove
Whitwood
Castleford
West Yorkshire
WF10 5NS

Dear Mrs Pickles

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ackton Pastures Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal and head of school, governors and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. In addition, the HMI toured the school with senior leaders.

Context

Since the inspection in March, a new School Improvement Adviser from the local authority has been appointed. The teacher with responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage remains on long-term absence and has relinquished her leadership role. Governors are seeking to appoint a replacement leader to commence duties at the beginning of the new school year in September 2013.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders and governors have responded well to the outcomes of the March inspection. As a group, they have put the disappointment of special measures behind them but understand the need to improve matters quickly. In doing so, they have focused effectively on raising the profile of teaching and have strengthened their systems for checking on the quality of lessons.

As a result, the pace of change is accelerating, everyone is stepping up to the mark and the collective responsibility for improving the school has grown. Furthermore, teachers are better placed to judge the impact of their work on pupils' progress and are more aware of the key features of effective practice in pupils' learning.

Senior leaders have drafted an appropriate improvement plan which follows closely the areas for improvement and provides a clear direction for the school. Close links are forged with the local authority's statement of action and suitable action is in place to bring about the necessary improvements. However, some of the targets within the plan are not as sharp as they could be. This makes it difficult for senior leaders and governors to pinpoint with precision how effectively the school is improving over time. In addition, it is not always clear how the impact of the plan will be evaluated.

Governance is becoming more effective. In a short period of time governors have brought a sense of urgency and commitment to improving the school. Their early actions are demonstrating their potential to have an impact more consistently on school improvement in the months ahead.

The local authority has brokered a range of helpful support, including linking the school with other successful leaders in the area with a proven track record in improvement and leadership.

The local authority's statement of action is robust in the way it links to the school's areas for improvement and includes specific milestones against which progress can be measured. The role of the governing body in challenging and holding the school to account is made clear. The plan would benefit from identifying different named people to be responsible for leading the action to those who are monitoring and greater clarity given to whom, when and how the success of the plan will be measured.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector