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15 July 2013

Mr Stephen Hanscombe
Headteacher
Mill Hill Community Primary School
Crosby Road
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL6 1AE

Dear Mr Hanscombe

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mill Hill Community Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit with Philip Smith Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 12 July 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, representatives of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and class teachers to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Main findings

There has been too little effective action before or since the section 5 inspection to suggest that the school will be a good school at its next inspection. A school development plan is appropriately linked to the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report, but the plan's potential effectiveness is diminished because expectations of teachers are not high enough, nor is accountability being used well to raise expectations and standards.

You have not vigorously challenged teaching that is not good enough. In our discussions it was clear that you and senior staff know what the barriers are to moving the school on, but

have yet to tackle these convincingly. Local authority support for mathematics is valued by the school, but in relation to the school's effectiveness over time this support is too little, too late. The local authority and the governing body have not challenged, in order to effect change, the lack of progress in improving teaching and achievement across three successive inspections. The governors with whom inspectors met recognise the need to be sharper and more robust in holding senior leaders, and in turn teachers, to account through the performance management process.

We reviewed lesson observation records together and agreed that the focus of observations and the subsequent written feedback are not linked precisely enough to the areas for improvement in the inspection report. We also agreed that grades for teaching quality and the impact this has on pupils' progress over time should be made explicit to teachers in written records. You have taken steps to formalise targets for teachers based upon pupils' progress during the coming school year which is a move in the right direction.

The school does not have a formal link with a partner institution. All staff would benefit from a carefully managed contact with a stronger school, so that high quality teaching and successful leadership and management of the improvement of teaching and learning are thoroughly understood. Similarly, governance would benefit from support, possibly brokered by the local authority, to develop the governing body's capacity to challenge where weaker performance measures do not show signs of improvement.

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

- form a partnership with a good or outstanding school in order to support work to improve teaching and the leadership and management of this work.

Ofsted will carry out a further visit as discussed at the feedback and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school says it finds the local authority support for developing mathematics provision helpful. However, external support, including that provided to the school by the local authority, has had little discernible impact on the quality of provision and outcomes, or on expectations, since the section 5 inspection. It is recommended that the local authority seek to broker a partnership with a good or outstanding school where mathematics provision and outcomes are of the highest quality. Also, the local authority should seek to broker an arrangement to build capacity within the governing body in terms of their understanding of academic matters.

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

Yours sincerely

Cathryn Kirby

Her Majesty's Inspector