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Mr J Foxwell
Headteacher
Romanby Primary School
The Close
Romanby
Northallerton
DL7 8BL

Dear Mr Foxwell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Romanby Primary School, Northallerton

Following my visit to your school on 24 September 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, three governors and a representative from the local authority. I spoke to pupils and staff, and examined school documents, including the post Ofsted action plan, monitoring records of teaching and your latest progress data. I also observed teaching and learning in the ten classes in the school.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, two supply teachers are working a Year 3/4 class and a Year 1 class, respectively. A teacher has also been employed to deliver art, music and design and technology to pupils during other teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time. An existing teacher, who ran a school project, has returned to teaching a class. A teacher is absent through illness. There is a new Chair of the Governing Body.

Main findings

The school's leaders understand and accept that they have not been effective enough in driving the school's improvement in recent times and the headteacher in particular is determined to make amends. He has clear view of what changes need to be made and has adopted a steelier persona and a no nonsense approach to holding staff more robustly to

account for the quality of their work in relation to the level of responsibility they hold, and the extent to which they adhere to agreed whole-school policies and procedures. Generally, staff are responding positively to the raft of initiatives and strategies being implemented, although some are less convinced of the need to change their practice. During the inspection, some improvements were seen in the quality of marking and feedback, the deployment of teaching assistants and pupils' progress, but the overall position remains patchy. There are some initial signs of impact which the school recognise must be built upon and accelerated if the school is to have any chance of moving its effectiveness to good by the time of the re-inspection

While aware of some of the issues, and despite asking searching questions of the school's leaders and demanding evidence of impact, governors were unable to exert a sufficiently strong strategic influence to ensure the school's performance was any better than mediocre. They have refined their procedures, accessed training and sworn to take a more robust line in holding the school's leaders to account for the school's effectiveness.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take some effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- urgently challenge the remaining 'can't do' culture that persists so that expectations of what pupils can achieve and what staff must to enable it are consistently high
- further increase staff accountability for the quality and effectiveness of their work
- link formally with a good or better school to accelerate further the school's improvement.

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 school is receiving targeted support from the local authority which has focused upon training, advice and guidance to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and special educational needs coordinator. It has also involved work to increase the effectiveness of the school's literacy provision, and its support for pupils deemed vulnerable to underachieving. All of these interventions are showing initial signs of impact. The local authority is also monitoring the school's progress in addressing the issues from the previous inspection and is evaluating the extent to which senior leaders are driving improvement. They have brokered support to the school from a headteacher deemed to have had success in robustly holding staff to account.

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

Yours sincerely

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector