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Mrs Emma Midgley
Acting Headteacher
Christ Church Pellon CE (VC) Primary School
Sandbeds Road
Pellon
Halifax
West Yorkshire
HX2 0QQ

Dear Mrs Midgley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Christ Church Pellon CE (VC) Primary School, Calderdale

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 July 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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 improvement plan targets the areas which are the school's top priorities
- set challenging targets for pupils based on a robust analysis of their attainment and progress
- identify the weaker areas of learning in mathematics so that the consultant support already arranged can be tightly focused in order to bring about improvements as rapidly as possible
- make sure that support from a range of partners is coherent and coordinated to avoid conflicting advice and overloading staff.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, governors including the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and the Early Years Foundation Stage action plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, the headteacher has left to take up a headship elsewhere. One teacher left the school in July and this post has been filled by a newly qualified teacher. The governing body has appointed the deputy headteacher as acting headteacher for two terms. In addition, governors have seconded a teacher from a local school for two terms in the role of acting deputy headteacher.

Main findings

The school improvement plan, currently in draft form, is too wide reaching to drive the developments required with precision. It lacks firm baselines in some areas and does not have clear, quantifiable success criteria for measuring progress. The action plan for raising achievement in mathematics is also in draft at present. A detailed audit of learning in mathematics to identify strengths and weaknesses is required so that the plan, training and actions are focused accurately on the improvements needed.

The action plan for improving provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage is close to completion. It is clearly focused and has already begun to be implemented. The recently appointed Early Years Foundation Stage leader has made a brisk start in revamping the indoor, and to a lesser extent outdoor, learning environment for the Reception class. Accurate assessments at the end of the Reception Year identified shortfalls in the learning of pupils now in Year 1, particularly with regard to numeracy. The plan includes appropriate Early Years Foundation Stage provision, as well as support for teaching in Year 1, to accelerate pupils' progress in this area and help them make up lost ground. Training has already taken place to improve the accuracy of initial assessments of the skills and knowledge of children who have just joined the school in Reception.

The governing body took effective steps towards the end of last term to secure the leadership of the school for this year. Helpfully, they have arranged regular support for the acting headteacher from a consultant who knows the school well. However, the details and expectations of this support have yet to be spelled out. This term governors have begun the process of recruiting a new headteacher.

Ofsted will 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 belongs to several clusters and partnerships of local schools from which support can be drawn, but the precise details of this have yet to be decided. The local authority has arranged for a Local Leader in Education, the headteacher of a school in the immediate vicinity, to mentor the acting headteacher. The local authority officer attached to the school has taken up this role from the beginning of term so is becoming familiar with the situation and the need for support to be coordinated.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children and Young People's Services for Calderdale and the Diocese of Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin

Her Majesty's Inspector