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Mrs Sue Atkinson
Headteacher
South Milford Community Primary School
Sand Lane
South Milford
Leeds
North Yorkshire
LS25 5AU

Dear Mrs Atkinson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to South Milford Community Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 2 October 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:

- complete the development plan and increase the pace and timescale of actions
- include measurable improvements in the plan for the progress of more able pupils, pupils with special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium
- strengthen monitoring and evaluation by producing a timetable that includes scrutiny of planning, work and lesson observations by teachers with responsibility for leading specific subjects.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan and other documents provided by the school were evaluated.

Context

One teacher has left the school and one class teacher is absent. Temporary teachers are teaching the Year 3 class. A new Chair of Governors has been elected and started the role on 1 September.

Main findings

Together with your senior leaders you have begun to draft an action plan: it includes each of the areas for improvement identified in the inspection. However, it is incomplete: the timeline for improvement in the autumn term is particularly slow and the impact that the various actions are intended to have on the progress of specific groups of pupils is not clear enough. Because the school plan is not well enough developed it does not enable governors to rigorously check the impact of the school's work or to hold leaders to account for their actions to improve the school's effectiveness.

Roles have been clarified and leadership responsibilities for English, mathematics assigned. Two leaders are beginning to share classroom practice in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, although at this stage there is no evidence of specific impact to report. The school is starting to analyse data and information more thoroughly. You feel that this is helping to clarify teachers' understanding about the progress pupils are expected to make. Sharper targets for reading, writing and mathematics have been set for all pupils, and particularly for those in Key Stage 1. Analysis of the 2013 tests and assessments has helped to identify barriers to raising standards in mathematics and writing. This has led to the school commissioning further training to improve the teaching of calculation and in particular strategies to help pupils to quickly master mental calculation.

Governors have established a 'rapid improvement group' to meet weekly to monitor the impact of the schools' work to bring about improvement. A timetable of monitoring and evaluation has been devised but this does not link sufficiently with the timescale of the school plan or include frequent scrutiny of planning, work and lesson observations to inform governors weekly meetings. Teachers who have responsibility for leading specific subjects are not presently involved in evaluating standards or teaching and reporting to governors.

The latest parent view, Ofsted's online survey of parents, has had further responses since the inspection in July 2013 and the feedback reflects concerns about the quality of communication. Governors are starting to respond to these concerns. The Governing Body's recent meeting with parents is a positive step towards beginning to improve dialogue and keep parents informed about the actions being taken to improve their children's education. The greater attention that the school now intends to give to working with parents as partners in their children's learning is reflected in a useful programme of workshops to share approaches for supporting children's writing, mathematics and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. HMI will return to the school later in the autumn term to carry out a further monitoring visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to meet with the full governing body, to review the revised action plan and ensure that appropriate procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are in place.

External support

The local authority has devised a detailed programme of support for the school for the next two terms linked to clear expectations for improving pupils' achievement, teaching and leadership. A planned review of the school has been brought forward and this is due to take place in the next few weeks. The local authority have also arranged a partnership with two good schools, Athelstan Primary School, and Sherburn Hungate School to support senior leaders in the task of developing and improving classroom practice. This work has yet to begin so it is not possible to assess any impact on school improvement. Planned training to develop teachers understanding of strategies to support mathematics teaching is scheduled to take place within days of this visit.

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

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Mr Jim Snowball - Chair of the Governing Body