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4 December 2013

Mrs Helen Boothroyd
Headteacher
Skelmanthorpe First and Nursery School
Elm Street
Skelmanthorpe
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
HD8 9DZ

Dear Mrs Boothroyd

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Skelmanthorpe First and Nursery School, Kirklees

Following my visit to your school on 3 December 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 October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- enhance the role of external partners in securing the judgements the school makes about itself.
- sharpen the success criteria in the post Ofsted plans so that they are more succinct, provide clearer milestones and are directly focussed on the impact actions are having.

Evidence

During my visit, I had conversations with you and other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school's post Ofsted plan was evaluated. Visits to all classrooms in the school were undertaken.

Main findings

The school has made an effective start to getting to good. This is because you, your senior leaders and staff have responded very positively to the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. The plans for improvement focuses on these areas with an appropriate allocation of key staff linked to actions. This is a clear and ambitious plan with set time scales for completing actions. Governors have a defined responsibility for monitoring the progress being made within the plan. However, the impact that recent actions are already having, and measures to review the impact of future actions are not always clear. This detail would better inform planning and help governors provide effective challenge and support to school leaders.

You and your senior leaders have gained the commitment of staff and governors to get the school to good. This is because the new leadership team has worked hard and brought an energy to formulating their plan and carrying out a number of improvements since the recent inspection. These include reviewing, renewing and implementing new pro-forma for marking scrutiny, work scrutiny, lesson observations and planning scrutiny. These have been shared with staff and are starting to be implemented. The planning scrutiny includes follow up work with teachers working jointly to learn from each other's best practice. In addition you are already developing a better shared understanding of the characteristics of effective teaching and learning and what that should look like in lessons. Meetings, looking at the progress pupils are making have also been held with all staff.

Arrangements are in place to work more closely with other schools in the partnership. Opportunities to use these and other partnerships to help the school make judgements about how well it is doing are not yet in place.

Teachers are clear about their next steps. This is because the school appraisal process is in place for all staff and targets are focused on the school improvement priorities. The school is now considering how best to bring together the existing programmes that monitor the progress pupils are making, evaluate the quality of teaching and what steps individuals need to take to improve their practice.

The governing body has a good understanding of what the school needs to do to get to good. This is because governors are knowledgeable about the actions being undertaken by you and the senior leaders. They have all received a copy of the planned actions and are scheduled to review it immediately following my visit. They have established a new committee structure with a clear brief about the next steps to be taken. The new Chair of Governors is supported by the former Chair of Governors in a planned seamless handover. Governors are keen to develop a better understanding of how well school is performing.

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

External support is provided by the Transformation and Quality Improvement Officer (TQIO), commissioned by the local authority, who visits the school regularly to review progress and provide guidance. He has worked with you and your senior leaders to

contribute to the planning for improvement. The level of this support is planned to increase over the coming year.

The school works closely with other schools as part of a local partnership.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector