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16 January 2014

Mrs Elaine Kent
Headteacher
St George's CE School
School Street
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria
LA14 2JN

Dear Mrs Kent

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St George's CE School, Cumbria

Following my visit to the school on 15 January 2014, 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 November 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:

- Amend the improvement plan so that there are clear milestones which governors can use to evaluate the school's progress towards becoming good.
- Devise a clear system to track pupils' progress from their very varied starting points which takes account of the expected progress of pupils with complex special educational needs.

Evidence

During the visit, I held a meeting with 10 members of the governing body. I met with a representative of Cumbria Local Authority and with senior leaders. I toured the school with the headteacher.

Context

Since the inspection an assistant headteacher has left the school. A new teacher has been appointed.

Main findings

The whole staff immediately responded to the inspection findings in order to ensure they receive a good judgment at the next inspection. Each member of staff set targets with senior leaders for the year; these targets were based on the findings of the inspection. The school's improvement plan was updated quickly after the inspection. To help the journey towards being judged good, the improvement plan needs termly milestones which will allow governors and the local authority to measure the school's progress.

All staff attended a training day with other schools locally with a national speaker, Sir Tim Brighouse, looking at whole-school improvement. They also attended training in mathematics and in English. As a result, according to senior leaders, staff have become re-motivated, re-energised and have regained some confidence. Senior leaders have noted that staff expectations of pupils have increased.

Since the inspection the governing body has been quick to reorganise their committees into a new structure with new terms of reference. The meetings are planned to be held more frequently than before the inspection. The governors held a support and challenge meeting, for example, prior to Christmas which looked at the school's response to the inspection.

Governors have also set up a system of visits to the school to get more first-hand evidence about how well the school is performing. The evaluative reports of visit are then fed back into committee meetings. The committee meetings are well timed across the term so that the reports feed into meetings of the full governing body. As a result the level of governor scrutiny has increased as has governors' knowledge of how well the school is doing on its journey towards good and what still needs to be tackled.

Governors are working with the school to devise a new data system which tracks pupils' progress better from their starting points. This is important because a large proportion of pupils start and leave school mid-year and part-way through their education and a significant proportion of pupils have complex special educational needs.

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

Since the inspection there have been a few visits from representatives of the local authority. They have mainly been supportive to re-motivate staff, support the middle leadership, and to continue to resolve staffing issues. The authority advisor has also provided support in how to adapt the improvement plan to take account of the Ofsted inspection, as a result, the action plan fully covers the weaknesses identified within the inspection report.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector