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7 February 2014

Mr Rupert Madeley
Headteacher
Follifoot Church of England Primary School
Main Street
Follifoot
Harrogate
North Yorkshire
HG3 1DU

Dear Mr Madeley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Follifoot Church of England Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 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:

- secure the longer-term strategic leadership of the school
- determine who will lead on monitoring the progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities; and what additional advice and support may be needed to ensure that these pupils make progress in line with others.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you; three representatives of the governing body; a representative of the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Leeds and Harrogate to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The inspector spoke briefly to a few parents at the start of the school day and to some staff and pupils at lunchtime. The inspector looked at a number of other documents, including: the school's records of pupils' progress; the provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities; a sample of minutes from recent meetings of the governing

body and records of lesson monitoring activities. The inspector had a tour of the school with the headteacher.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection the headteacher has left to take up another post. An interim headteacher took over in January 2014 for two terms. He is also the headteacher of an outstanding primary school in an adjacent local authority.

The school's governors, together with the local authority, have reviewed the options for replacing the headteacher and have formally decided to pursue collaborative working arrangements in the local area. They are now seeking to formalise a partnership with another school with a view to sharing a headteacher. The full details of this have yet to be agreed.

Main findings

Prompt action is being taken to address the issues in the section 5 inspection report. The school's records show that the pace of pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate.

The interim headteacher has focused wisely on the quality of teaching, establishing a positive working environment where all staff play their part in improvement. He has set high expectations for the staff for what pupils can do. He has harnessed staff enthusiasm: staff report feeling 're-energised'. His early informal visits to see lessons have included helpful tips to the staff as to how they might improve their teaching. He has refined the school's system for tracking progress to show more clearly the rate of each pupil's progress and whether this is at, or above, national expectations. This is allowing staff to pinpoint who is falling behind more quickly, so that they can intervene where needed to help raise their achievement.

A programme of staff meetings and training is ensuring that all staff, teachers and assistants, are well informed about the actions the school is taking to ensure it can be judged good at its next full inspection. This includes briefings to get all the staff up to speed over time on the curriculum changes for each subject so that they can share how subjects will be managed. There is scope through future collaborative working arrangements with other schools to build up this subject expertise further. This is a sensible way forward for such a small school to deal with middle management roles.

The school no longer has a co-ordinator for special needs. Arrangements are in place to support pupils, but the school needs to formalise how the provision for these pupils will be managed in future.

Good initial moves are being made to improve pupils' writing skills, such as more regular spelling tests and encouragement of creative writing. Parents commented positively on this. Initiatives such as collating evidence of pupils' writing across all subjects in an 'everything' exercise book are well-intended but are as yet in the very early stages of being implemented.

To help raise levels of challenge, the school has begun to sharpen up the targets for each pupil and to involve them more in understanding how they are doing and how to improve. Pupils chatted enthusiastically about this over lunch.

Governors are having a good impact, most importantly, in securing a high-calibre interim headteacher to ensure continuity of leadership. They have wasted no time in coming to a carefully reasoned decision on the direction for the future, long-term leadership of the school. This has rightly been their main focus. They now need to finalise the details. Governors have been willing and open to listen to advice from the local authority and partners.

A governors' improvement committee is overseeing the implementation of the school's plan for improvement. This plan is suitable, focused on the right things, with clear milestones. It has helped to set the school off well on the road to improving to good or better.

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 drawing well on the external support and advice provided by the local authority and partners to bolster its improvement. Through the collaborative link with the school in the adjacent authority the interim headteacher is energetically leading the drive for improvement. A programme of teacher visits to this school has begun, to share good practice in teaching and learning, so that teachers can plan lessons that challenge pupils more.

A date has been fixed when the local authority will be providing further training on teaching phonics, tailored to the school's needs. The school has also linked up to the local teaching alliance 'HART' to supervise the progress of a newly-qualified teacher.

The school and governors have worked collaboratively with the local authority on drawing up the action plan for improvement and on the future strategic direction for the school. The authority is actively monitoring the impact of the improvement plan. The diocesan adviser works in harmony, to ensure the school's distinctive ethos is preserved.

The school must continue to access additional support as it seeks to set up future collaborative working arrangements with partner schools and secure the long-term leadership of the school, and to ensure good leadership of special educational needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon
Her Majesty's Inspector