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6 February 2014

Mrs Julie Lee
Headteacher
Luttons Community Primary School
West Lutton
Malton
North Yorkshire
YO17 8TF

Dear Mrs Lee

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

Following my visit to your school on 5 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. Although the school's plans are sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement, continuing changes to the staff remain a major obstacle to this. The school should take immediate action to:

- secure a full-time teacher for class 2 and resolve the unstable staffing situation in class 1 in order to ensure that teaching across the school continues to improve
- nominate who will lead on English, possibly drawing on the proposed partnership arrangements with other schools; and define what they need to do to improve pupils' literacy skills further
- ensure that the new acting headteacher builds on the plans and maintains the pace of change set by the headteacher who is leaving, so that pupils' progress continues to improve
- formalise the proposed partnership and cluster group arrangements, with the help of the local authority, to help strengthen leadership in the school, at all levels.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the 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 local authority support plan were evaluated. The inspector

toured the school with you, observing part of a lesson in class 1 and looking at writing in class 2. The inspector spoke to a few parents at the start of the school day and had lunch with pupils.

The inspector looked at some documents you provided relating to pupils' progress and the monitoring of teaching.

Context

Since the school's section 5 inspection staffing instability has continued. The current headteacher has resigned in order to take up another post and will leave at Easter 2014. From that point, the headteacher of a nearby school will take over the running of the school alongside her own. This represents the ninth headteacher for the school in five years.

There are two mixed-age classes. The teacher of class one is on long-term sickness absence. She is also the literacy coordinator. This class is currently being taught by a supply teacher.

The class 2 teacher works part time, sharing the class with the headteacher. The teaching assistant attached to this class is also on long-term sickness absence.

Main findings

You have been in post only since September 2013 but in this short time you have made a strong impact on setting the tone and expectations of staff and pupils. You have set the school off purposefully on the road to improvement but the current and imminent staffing changes are acting as a brake on the pace of change by slowing the rate of improvement and promoting uncertainty. This raises questions about whether the improving picture can be maintained.

The way ahead is not secure. You have done well to ensure that learning for the pupils continues, and a start has been made to improving the quality of teaching, but a lack of staff stability has hampered the impact of the actions taken so far. However, some positive impact of the actions you have taken can be discerned. For example, pupils' writing skills are improving. There is written work everywhere on the walls, showing pupils getting to grips well with cursive writing style and having far more opportunities now to write a length and for different audiences and purposes. There are good examples of where pupils are writing regularly in different subjects. This increased emphasis on writing was commented on positively by parents to whom the inspector spoke. You have driven this improvement forward determinedly in the absence of the literacy coordinator.

The staffing ratio in the class of younger pupils has been increased with a view to promoting faster progress. Although not a large class, the age range is wide. Planning has been sharpened so that the youngest children now have more purposeful direction in their activities. They are being guided effectively in their choices of activity and the atmosphere is one of purposeful learning through play. The children are beginning to develop skills organising themselves and so the need for staff to have do this for them is diminishing. Early indications are that this more focused approach to the early years teaching is beginning to promote faster rates of progress. In the part-lesson observed all the children were fully engaged and actively learning.

Governors have been proactive in their ideas for getting some better, more consistent arrangements for leadership for the future. They have sought out a suitable partnership and are very determined to see this make a difference to the school's effectiveness. Governors continue to provide strong challenge to the school.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. It is recommended that a further monitoring visit to the school takes place in the summer term once the new or returning staff are in place and the new headteacher has taken up her duties.

External support

The school is drawing well on the support provided by the local authority. Together they have drawn up and are implementing suitable plans for improvement. The local authority has eased the uncertainty around staffing by helping the school find suitable temporary staff to cover long-term staff absences, to avoid too much disruption to learning.

The school and authority are agreed that the way forward to get more consistent leadership at all levels in the school is to work in partnership with a local cluster group of schools. This seems a suitable way forward for this, very small school, The appointment of an acting headteacher for Easter 2014, shared with another local school, is a positive start. The well-considered decision to seek a full-time teacher for class 2 will provide continuity of teaching for the pupils and also free up the new headteacher from teaching duties, to focus on improvement.

The school and governors must continue to work closely over the coming two terms with the local authority to resolve the staffing and leadership issues that currently act as a barrier to the school's continued improvement.

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

Honoree Gordon

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation 