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Mrs Catherine Boocock
Headteacher
High Bentham Community Primary School
Main Street
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Lancaster
Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Boocock

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

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the subject leaders for literacy and numeracy, the Chair and three other members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. I reviewed a range of documentation including the school and local authority improvement plans, and information about the school's most recent lesson observations and pupils' current achievements. In addition, I undertook a tour of the school with the headteacher and looked at a small sample of pupils' work and teacher's marking in each class.

Context

A new Chair of the Governing Body and four new governors were appointed shortly after the section 5 inspection which judged to school to require improvement.

Main findings

The headteacher and subject leaders have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to bring about swift improvement. Recent lesson observations show that the quality of teaching is improving and a higher proportion is now good or better across the school. A new marking policy is in place. While more time is needed to ensure this is embedded consistently, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' feedback, confirms that the quality of marking is improving. Teachers are generally providing comments that help pupils know how to improve their work and more opportunities are being created in lessons to enable pupils to act on the feedback they have received.

Expectations about what pupils can achieve are rising. Individual pupil targets and the standard of their work in books and the many high quality displays around the school, indicate that pupils are being more appropriately challenged. Practical problem solving is now more evident in mathematics lessons and in creative and well thought out cross-curricular activities, such as measuring and constructing the type of shoes that would have been worn by Vikings. Improvements in the way pupils' progress is assessed and tracked is making sure that pupil progress meetings between teachers and senior leaders are increasingly being refined and focused on individual pupils. As a result, school leaders are confident that the actions being taken are leading to improvement in the quality of teaching and having a positive impact on pupils learning and achievement.

Governors demonstrate a clear intent to make a difference to the school. They are improving their ability to do so by accessing a range of appropriate training and seminars. A skills audit and self-review is underway to assess how best to utilise the additional skills and expertise the newly appointed governors bring to the governing body. The revised committee structure enables governors to monitor the impact and actions the headteacher and other leaders are taking and to support and challenge leaders more effectively. Governors are more visible in and around the school. Governors' consultation with parents and pupils has increased. Taking account of parents' and pupils' views is recognised as an important part of the improvement journey; as evidenced by the focus group the Chair of the Governing Body held with pupils recently to hear what difference they think the changes made are having on their learning and life at school.

Systems and strategies adopted to drive improvement forward are appropriate. The school improvement plans are suitable for purpose and follow the areas for further improvement identified during the inspection in October 2013. While the plans give a detailed picture of intended actions, the headteacher recognises that as yet there are too few targets and success criteria that focus sharply and specifically enough on intended outcomes for each year group, or that are matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. Nonetheless, actions taken to date are beginning to have an impact on the achievement of pupils.

Parents have been kept well informed about the school's progress. The Ofsted *Parent View* results (accessed 12 February 2013) indicate that almost all of the 39 parents who completed the questionnaire consider their children are happy at the school and parents are kept well informed about their children's progress.

External support

Support provided by the local authority since the inspection October 2013 is helping the headteacher and governors to tackle priorities in teaching and governance, for example. While the local authority support plan provides ample detail of the actions to be undertaken, it does not focus sufficiently on measuring and evaluating the impact of actions intended to secure improvements in pupils' progress and attainment over time. Links have recently been established with the Harrogate and Rural Teaching School Alliance through Askwith Community Primary School. The headteacher is a National Leader in Education and the school, located about an hour away, is a similar school that was deemed to be outstanding in all areas at its last inspection in 2008.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley

Her Majesty's Inspector