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25 February 2014

Mrs Rowena Sykes
Headteacher
Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School
Roman Road
Leeming
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 9SG

Dear Mrs Sykes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 24 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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:

- ensure the headteacher uses the full allocation of sustained, uninterrupted leadership time to maintain the current momentum of change
- adapt provision within the Early Years Foundation Stage so that the emphasis given to developing children's mathematics skills is equal to the currently stronger emphasis on literacy
- refine the school development plan so that there are clear milestone targets across the year to enable governors to readily identify how quickly actions are making a difference to the progress pupils make.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I undertook a brief tour of the school, speaking informally to teachers and pupils in each class and evaluated the school development plan, pupil progress information and your most recent records of the quality of teaching.

Context

Two new governors have joined the school since the inspection in November. This brings the governing body to full capacity.

Main findings

You have worked rapidly with both the governing body and the local authority to set the school on the correct pathway to becoming good or better in the next 18-24 months. Much has already been achieved since the inspection in November. This is because, although disappointed, you have readily accepted the judgement and have worked tirelessly, alongside a part-time teaching commitment, to improve both the quality of teaching and the mechanisms in place to judge its effectiveness in raising pupil outcomes. Governors are rightly concerned about the sustainability of such intense working as a 'teaching head'. It will be imperative that you fully utilise the allocated days for sustained, uninterrupted leadership time so that your necessary part-time teaching commitment does not detract from the current momentum of change.

Actions to improve teaching, some of which were started before the inspection, are now embedding into daily practice and, crucially, making a greater difference to pupil progress. Pupils say they are enjoying the many interesting scenarios that are now being planned for them to develop their writing skills, such as the recent link to the Winter Olympics. This increased engagement, together with the higher profile given to pupil targets, is already leading to faster progress. Teachers have begun to grasp your 'stage not age' approach to planning, necessary in mixed-age, whole key stage classes so that all pupils, regardless of their ability, are fully challenged in their learning. However, the learning environment and the planned experiences for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage focus on early literacy skills at the expense of their development in mathematics. This needs to be addressed urgently if children are to develop the firm foundations in early number and calculation that are needed to prevent the gaps in knowledge that have been evident in the past.

The increased frequency with which you are now collecting pupil progress information is allowing governors to hold the school more fully to account for the difference new initiatives are making to pupils' achievement. However, targets within the school development plan only reflect your ambitions for the end of each academic year. This makes it difficult for governors to know if pupils are making

enough progress each term to be on-track to reach your ambitious targets overall. You rightly identify that aligning your collection of data each half-term to a series of targets or milestones throughout the year would aid all stakeholders in identifying exactly how far the school has come at more regular intervals across the year. This would also enable quicker intervention if progress were to go off-course.

Governors are committed to supporting the school. The two new appointments have strengthened the influence of the governing body further through the reallocation of roles and responsibilities. This includes the formation of a curriculum committee to monitor progress towards becoming good or better more closely. In preparation for this, governors have increased their visits to school to see it at work. This is giving them a greater appreciation of the school's recent actions and enabling them to challenge leaders more robustly. Further clarity around expected rates of progress each term, as mentioned above, would enable governors to provide even greater challenge around the difference new initiatives are making to pupil achievement.

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

You have worked quickly alongside the local authority to broker a considerable amount of support for the school. This has included a series of supported reviews of teaching to unpick the precise elements of each subject that require improvement. In turn, this has identified specific training for staff on subject-based issues in English and mathematics. This is already leading to improvements in teaching.

Effective links have been forged with a local school, whose own success in 'getting to good' is already providing you with valuable insight regarding the journey a small school needs to take in order for achievement and teaching to improve at pace. A peer practitioner from this partner school, through the Swaledale Teaching Alliance, has already delivered support in the Early Years Foundation Stage, improving the quality of the learning environment to good effect. This collaborative working arrangement is set to continue as further needs are identified.

You and the school's Chair of Governors agree that it would be beneficial to attend an Ofsted *getting to good* seminar over the next few months. This is in the process of being arranged.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Owston

Her Majesty's Inspector