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Mrs Clair Clark
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Clark

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Trawden Forest Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 26 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:

- ensure that pupils make more rapid progress in mathematics by consistently providing teachers with specific advice and feedback on how to develop pupils' mathematical skills and understanding.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the acting deputy headteacher, the associate headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, the governor with oversight of mathematics and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I made brief visits with you to all classes and I considered a range of pupils' work, in their exercise books and on displays in classrooms and corridors. I read the new policies that you have introduced and reviewed assessment data for pupils currently in school. I talked informally to several pupils about their work.

Context

Since the most recent inspection, you have continued to lead the school as acting headteacher and this arrangement will continue until the end of summer term 2014. The governors are seeking to appoint a permanent headteacher. A teacher has been seconded from another Lancashire school as acting deputy headteacher. An associate headteacher provides support to you for one day per week. One teacher is currently absent and a temporary member of staff is teaching their class. Two governors have left and one new governor has been appointed. Pupil numbers have remained stable.

Main findings

You and the deputy headteacher are providing decisive leadership and clear direction. The school accepted the judgement that it requires improvement and there is strong evidence that leaders, teachers, support staff and governors are pulling together to improve outcomes for pupils.

With the help of the local authority, you have drawn up an action plan that addresses the areas for improvement identified as a result of the recent inspection. Your plan is clear and manageable. It includes appropriate milestones and comprehensive monitoring arrangements. You have ensured that a range of evidence is scrutinised to underpin your assessment of the quality of teaching. You consider pupils' progress in detail and have a robust means of comparing their performance from their various starting points with that of pupils nationally. You have analysed the impact of the school's spending of pupil premium (additional funding provided to support pupils eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local council and children of service families). This funding is having a positive impact on the achievement and attendance of the pupils it supports.

You have a good understanding of the quality of teaching across the school and about how it can be improved. You have lost no time in developing policies for the improvement of teaching and in providing bespoke support to individual teachers. Regular pupil progress meetings are now being held at which teachers discuss the work of every individual pupil and consider what further steps should be taken to boost their learning. Teachers are more confident in evaluating their own work and you have developed a system whereby feedback provided by leaders to teachers is revisited so that improvements can be tracked. The school's records, based on assessments that are moderated, indicate that pupils' progress is accelerating, although not as strongly in mathematics as in reading and writing at Key Stage 2. Pupils' skills in matching letters with the sounds they make (phonics) are developing well, partly because of attention leaders have paid to developing smooth transition between Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

The teaching of mathematics was identified at the recent inspection as a specific area requiring improvement. The school timetable has been adapted to ensure that there is more time dedicated to mathematics teaching. The Year 6 teacher has recently begun to lead the development of mathematics in the absence of the substantive mathematics leader. She is being shadowed by a newly qualified teacher with a mathematics specialism to develop leadership capacity in this area. The mathematics leader is planning a detailed audit of teaching resources and will provide further guidance to staff as a result of this. Staff have received additional training on mathematics teaching from a local authority consultant and you have observed a range of mathematics lessons, reviewed pupils' books and recorded

their individual learning targets. The feedback to teachers considers whether their planning, delivery and assessment of pupils' work are appropriate but does not always offer specific advice on mathematical teaching.

A number of developments are contributing to improved teaching and progress: more consistent teaching of reading with a focus on pupils' comprehension skills; better quality of feedback from teachers including time for pupils to respond to corrections; guidance for pupils through more ambitious targets and steps to success. Good practice in teaching is being shared within school through regular staff training and meetings. In addition, links have been forged with other schools so that work in different settings can be observed. A strength in your approach is your regular consultation with pupils on their perception of the impact of changes. You have also ensured that parents are aware of developments, including through a revised approach to parents' evenings that focuses specifically on pupils' next steps in learning.

An external review of governance has been undertaken and governors are acting on its findings, including considering the reconstitution of the Governing Body. Governance has been strengthened by a new governor who is an experienced headteacher. You keep governors well informed and they are developing confidence in holding you to account. The standards and effectiveness committee monitors the progress the school is making in implementing its action plan to become a good school.

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 local authority was aware, prior to the inspection, that the school needed support to build leadership capacity because there had been a period of some instability. They had provided a mentor to you with experience of improving a school rapidly. When the school was judged to require improvement, this person became associate headteacher. She provides good support, particularly in developing pupil progress meetings with staff and working with the two newly qualified teachers. In addition, the local authority has seconded a deputy headteacher for the remainder of the academic year. Two consultants have been provided to support staff development; one is supporting the leadership of mathematics. The school improvement adviser works with you on a regular basis and is also supporting the Governing Body in appointing the substantive headteacher. Furthermore, governors are in receipt of training from Lancashire Governor Services, who conducted the external review of the Governing Body. An adviser from Lancashire's Monitoring and Intervention Team attends half termly meetings of the governors' standards and effectiveness committee in order to monitor the school's progress and is providing governors with further training on the analysis of progress data. The support and challenge provided by the local authority is having a clear impact on improving the school's work and accelerating pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector