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Ms K Ungerechts
Executive Headteacher
Baldersby St James Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Baldersby St James
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Dear Ms Ungerechts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Baldersby St James Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 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 all pupils know the current level they are working at and understand the school's expectations of their performance.
- Provide good quality information, for example, about the impact of work to support behaviour and attendance to enable governors to fully evaluate the school's performance.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The work of the school was evaluated, a range of documentation was scrutinised including school planning, achievement data, reports to governors and the outcomes of monitoring activities. Two lessons were observed.

Context

There has been considerable change since the last monitoring inspection: the headteacher has relinquished the role and left the school at the end of the autumn term and the Key Stage 2 class teacher is absent through illness. An executive headteacher has led the school since 1 January 2014. Temporary teachers are covering the class teacher's absence and the part-time teaching of the class that had previously been part of the headteacher's role. A new class teacher has been appointed to undertake this role from February half-term.

Main findings

The school plan is now sharply focused on driving improvement. This work includes specific actions to support pupils in developing skills to use and apply mathematics and a greater focus on teaching spelling and grammar to improve writing. Governors are clear about expectations and targets: the milestones in the plan are contributing to their confidence in holding leaders to account. Reports provided to governors are helping them to gain an accurate view of pupils' achievement, although, there is some way to go in developing a wider range of information, for example of behaviour and attendance, in order to assist them in fully evaluating school performance. Information from the end of term tests and tasks, introduced by the previous headteacher, are being used effectively to identify pupils who are starting to fall behind. Thorough analysis of pupils' performance has also led to robust actions to tackle the reasons for slower progress in mathematics and writing. Support for underachieving pupils is in place. Key Stage 1 pupils are responding to the support and guidance they have received and are learning to spell accurately. Standards at Key Stage 2 are starting to rise, particularly at the highest levels.

You have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and what is required to support improvement. Recent checks of pupils' work that you undertook with the local authority consultant have led to sharply focused actions to improve the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Your strong emphasis on grouping by ability means that pupils are starting to receive work that is more challenging, particularly in writing. This is not yet the case in mathematics where lower expectations and a lack of clarity slow pupils' progress. You have started to use your specialist expertise to develop teachers' knowledge and confidence in teaching mathematics prior to a programme of additional support and guidance from external consultants that is due to begin shortly. Although teaching is not consistently good, teachers are starting to check pupils' understanding during lessons and provide more guidance and support. For example, this led to effective sharing of pupils' tips for success during a mathematics lesson in Key Stage 2, and helped to support pupils in checking their work. Key Stage 2 pupils are starting to become more involved in learning and are beginning to monitor their progress. However, this work is at a very early stage and there is much to do to secure this and ensure that all pupils know the current level they are working at and understand the school's expectations of them.

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

Since the last monitoring inspection the school has received extensive support and challenge from the local authority school improvement officer. Communication between the local authority, executive headteacher and governors has improved greatly: for example, all are clear about the intended impact of training and support. The local authority acted speedily to support the school and quickly arranged interim leadership following the departure of the headteacher. This is working effectively and provides a useful and coherent link to the planned additional support from Alanbrooke Primary School, the Executive Headteacher's substantive school.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White

Her Majesty's Inspector