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Mr Christan Upton
Headteacher
Delph Side Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Upton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Delph Side Community Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 4 April 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 January 2014. 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:

- Refine the 'intended outcomes' in the action plan to include measurable milestones that allow governors to check the plan is working.
- Further broaden the focus of the Standards and Effectiveness Committee, to challenge the effectiveness of all senior leaders and middle leaders, holding them accountable for the impact of their actions.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, representatives of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans and other documentation regarding school self-evaluation and improvement were evaluated. I visited every class in the school during the day to see teaching, pupils' work and the impact of actions.

Context

Since the inspection, three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, have resigned their positions and three new governors, including a new Chair, have taken up appointments.

Main findings

You wasted no time since the inspection, which you recognise as an accurate evaluation of the school, in taking actions to secure improvement.

An action plan was quickly established. This plan identifies appropriate priorities that are closely linked to the areas for action that were identified in your inspection report. However, it should be further refined to include milestones that will allow your governors to check that it is working.

Pupils' progress is improving because teaching is improving. You are clear with staff about your high expectations, consequently teachers now plan learning more effectively in all year groups. Teachers are clearer about what they expect pupils to achieve in a lesson and that they set a range of activities that stretch and challenge pupils of all abilities.

Standards in writing are improving because of the actions you have taken to develop opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in other subjects.

Teachers are beginning to use assessments more effectively to ensure that what they teach has the best effect on learning. You have made sure that data is better shared and that staff are trained in what it means and how to use it.

Marking is improving and helping pupils to learn more quickly. You have reviewed your marking policy so that all pupils receive regular feedback about how well they are doing and how they can further improve their work. You have also increased how often you check books to see if the marking is good enough.

Teachers have visited other schools to learn from good and outstanding practice. This has resulted in some new initiatives being established at Delph Side that again are helping pupils to learn more quickly. For example all classrooms now have working walls for English and mathematics that children say they find useful in helping them to understand and learn.

Leadership and management are getting better. The Governing Body is developing at a rapid pace and has significantly increased its level of challenge on senior leaders. The new Chair of Governors' decisive and effective leadership is having significant impact, helping other governors to feel empowered to ask questions and evaluate the performance of the school's actions.

Governors have had training in the use of data and pursued the completion of an external review of governance. This has been completed and they have recently received the report. However, they had already compiled an effective initial action plan which contained many of the priorities it identified. Any further actions will be included in this plan.

The governing body established a Standards and Effectiveness Committee which is effective in holding the headteacher to account. The remit of this committee should now be further expanded to include all leaders in school so that they too are held to account for the pace of improvement.

Middle leaders now have more clarity about their roles and responsibilities because you have defined and shared them with all staff. Middle leaders are receiving training from the local authority's 'Monitoring and Intervention Team' on how to lead and evaluate their subjects, but it is too soon to see its impact.

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 is providing a good level of support and challenge to the school through its school advisor and its Monitoring and Intervention Team. It has also brokered a link with a local leader in education from a neighbouring school.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon

Her Majesty's Inspector