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Mrs Carol Brotherton
Headteacher
Thornton Watlass Church of England Primary School
Thornton Watlass
Ripon
North Yorkshire
HG4 4AH

Dear Mrs Brotherton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thornton Watlass Church of England Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 25 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 February 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:

- respond to the areas for improvement outlined in the review of governance
- organise a calendar for the collection of first hand evidence by governors so it investigates the impact of actions taken to improve the school
- extend the action plan to cover at least the next 12 months
- further improve the response of pupils to marking so it accelerates their progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other teachers and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Telephone conversations were held with a representative of the local authority and the National Leader of Education (NLE) who is working with the school. The action plan and other documents provided by the school were evaluated. The headteacher and HMI conducted a learning walk and also visited Snape Community Primary School which forms part of the federation to which Thornton Watlass Church of England Primary School belongs.

Context

The Headteacher will retire in December 2014.

The two schools in the federation have been reorganised. From 1 July 2014 all Key Stage 2 pupils will be taught at Thornton Watlass Church of England Primary School and Key Stage 1 and Early Years Foundation Stage will be taught at Snape Community Primary School. In September 2014 the school will admit three year old children for the first time.

Main findings

The school and the local authority have action plans in place to address the areas for improvement. Success criteria and milestones help leaders and governors to measure the impact of actions. The headteacher has ambitious expectations for progress. The plan now needs to be extended to include actions for next year.

The quality of teaching has improved. The NLE has led staff training about good teaching and learning. Teachers have had the opportunity to observe outstanding practice in another school. One teacher commented that she had improved the way she organised and managed learning following the observations. Recent observations made jointly by the headteacher and the NLE suggest that teaching and learning is now good. Case studies identify the barriers to learning in literacy and numeracy for every pupil and the support strategies and interventions to be put into place to boost their progress. Data which is collected termly is carefully analysed. As a result teachers know their pupils very well. Teachers are making better use of data to plan lessons at the right level for their pupils. In the Key Stage 2 lesson seen during the learning walk pupils were working on a shared learning objective with success criteria linked to their level. Each pupil was provided with appropriate support and challenge to ensure they made progress in their extended writing to explain the way a machine worked. The writing was based on a goal scoring machine from 'Wallace and Grommet' which captured their imagination. Improvements in teaching and learning are beginning to have a positive impact on progress.

There has been a focus on writing. The school is using a specialist writing scheme to enhance the quantity and quality of writing. The impact of this can be seen in pupils' books where vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar have been emphasised. Pupils are using rich vocabulary in their writing and in discussion. Wall displays are annotated to show why a particular piece of writing is effective. Presentation in books has improved. Both literacy and numeracy books seen showed well-presented work. Rewards for good handwriting and good pieces of writing are given in weekly assemblies, highlighting their importance to the pupils.

Robust monitoring and evaluation of pupils' books in literacy and numeracy shows marking and feedback which is thorough and recognises pupils' success in meeting the learning objective and sometimes next steps for them to respond to. This could usefully be extended so that pupils are more regularly making a response which accelerates their progress.

Leadership and management are improving. The headteacher has worked with the NLE from an outstanding school in the local teaching alliance and they have jointly observed lessons in both schools. The NLE supports the view that the school's procedures for judging outcomes are accurate and more rigorous. An external review of governance has very recently been completed which identifies useful areas for improvement. The governing body now needs to act on the advice provided in the review. Governors show huge commitment to the reorganisation and improvement of the school. They collect first hand evidence by conducting learning walks and scrutinising pupils' work. They plan to introduce a school improvement committee to monitor the performance of pupils. The governors should devise a monitoring and evaluation calendar to identify when first hand evidence will be collected and recorded to monitor the impact of actions taken by the school to address the areas for improvement.

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 NLE from the local teaching alliance has provided support and training for the headteacher and teachers. The headteacher brokered the support of another outstanding school where teachers have been to observe good practice. The local authority representative knows the school very well and visits regularly. Visits include formal lesson observations and termly monitoring of all aspects of the school. The local authority has also conducted a review of the Early Years Foundation Stage and provided support and training for teaching assistants.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

Her Majesty's Inspector