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30 June 2014

Mr Nicholas Coates
Headteacher
Darley Community Primary School
Darley
Harrogate
North Yorkshire
HG3 2PZ

Dear Mr Coates

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Darley Community Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 27 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 March 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 school action plans so that there are clear timelines and targets and success criteria focus sharply on intended outcomes for pupils
- use assessment and tracking information more effectively to inform planning, refine targets, and to monitor, evaluate and summarise pupil performance.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor, and local authority lead adviser. I evaluated a range of documentation including the school and local authority improvement plans, information on the pupils' current achievements, minutes of

meetings and the school's recently introduced policies on marking and feedback and the presentation of work. In addition, I undertook a tour of the school with the headteacher and had a brief conversation with the staff at the start of the school day.

Context

There have been no significant changes in the school's organisation since the section 5 inspection which judged the school to require improvement.

Main findings

The headteacher has a sound understanding of what needs to be done. A new marking and feedback policy is in place and scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' feedback, confirms that the quality of marking is improving. Teachers are using the 'clouds and ladders' comments effectively and providing guidance that helps pupils know how to improve their work. The headteacher and staff recognise that there is more to be done to provide routine opportunities in lessons for pupils to act on the feedback they receive. Similarly, a presentation policy has been implemented. Scrutiny of a small sample of pupils' books confirms that higher standards and expectations have been set and in most cases, poorly presented work is being returned for the pupil to improve.

The range and quality of monitoring activities undertaken by middle leaders and by the governors Teaching and Learning Committee has increased. Effective use is being made of photographic evidence and small samples of pupils' work to show how and where improvements are being made and to share best practice. External moderation of teachers' assessments by the local authority and levelling of pupils' work conducted jointly with staff from Dacre Braithwaite Primary School, confirm the accuracy of the school's assessments. As a result, staff are confident that standards are rising and pupils are making better progress than in 2013. At the end of Year 6, almost all pupils look set to meet or exceed their targets.

The school has comprehensive and accurate tracking information that is used carefully to monitor the progress and attainment of each individual pupil. As yet, this information is not being used to inform planning, refine targets, and monitor, evaluate and summarise pupil performance by subject, year group and gender for example.

Teaching staff and teaching assistants recognise the importance of continuous professional development and training as a driver for school improvement. They have begun to share best practice internally and are keen to exploit their links with local partner schools. Two teachers are due to commence the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leaders in September 2014.

Governors demonstrate a clear intent to make a difference to the school. They are improving their ability to do so by committing to undertake an external review early

in the autumn term. Systems and strategies adopted to drive improvement forward are appropriate. The school improvement plans are suitable for purpose and follow the areas for further improvement identified during the inspection in March 2014. While the plans give a clear picture of intended actions, timelines and completion dates are not specific enough. There are too few targets and success criteria that focus sharply and specifically enough on intended outcomes for each year group, or the needs of different groups of pupils. Nonetheless, actions taken to date are beginning to have an impact on the achievement of pupils.

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 advice and support being provided by the local authority is challenging the headteacher to demonstrate evidence of improvement and progress and helping staff to develop strategies for the school's next steps. Specific activities undertaken in the school to date include: support for the development of the school action plan; scrutiny of pupils work and standards of presentation in their books; teachers planning and marking; learning walks and moderation of teacher assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Specialist mathematics support is due to commence shortly. The local authority action plan is currently being revised so that intended actions and success are measured in terms of improved outcomes for pupils.

Darley has several existing partnership arrangements in place including: the Harrogate and Rural Teaching Schools Alliance, the Dales Teaching Alliance, Dacre Braithwaite Teaching School and the Service Children Mobility Group. The headteacher and staff are currently identifying their support needs for the coming academic year before making approaches to the school's partners.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate