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Mr Darren Dudman
Headteacher
Ripon Cathedral Church of England Primary School
Priest Lane
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North Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Dudman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ripon Cathedral Church of England Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 15 July 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 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:

- ensure the performance of teachers is managed robustly in 2014-15, by:
 - setting measurable objectives that are tightly linked to pupil progress
 - ensuring all teachers have review meetings to consider evidence of their progress towards their objectives and their professional development needs
 - ensuring senior leaders and governors take steps to standardise objectives and moderate decisions about pay progression
- increase the proportion of pupils that make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring teaching challenges and extends the most able students
- ensure there is a planned approach for checking on the impact of the new curriculum, so that subject leaders have enough evidence to tell whether changes are leading to improvements in teaching and learning.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, subject leaders for English and mathematics and two other teachers. I also met with representatives of the local authority and three members of the governing body, including the Chair and vice-chair, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You accompanied me on a tour of the school to observe the learning environment, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning. I evaluated the school's plans for improvement and scrutinised a range of other documents, including records of governing body meetings, checks on the quality of teaching and assessment data.

Context

Since the last inspection an additional teacher has been employed on a part-time basis to deliver additional support programmes for pupils making slower progress in Year 5. There have been no other changes to staffing or to the membership of the governing.

Main findings

You have put in place plans for the year ahead to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection and to embed the vision and values of the school. Your plans recognise that work done over the last 18 months to improve the teaching of English and mathematics needs further refinement, and that the teaching of other subjects now requires particular attention. The plans include useful milestones that set out what needs to be achieved at key points across the year, although these milestones do not include measurable targets for pupil progress.

In order to improve the quality of teaching you have looked closely at the impact learning support assistants. As a result of this study you have provided training to improve their questioning skills and to help them challenge pupils to think more deeply. Teachers are also considering more carefully how they work with learning support assistants, so that their work is not always focused on supporting lower attaining pupils or those with special educational needs. You have also looked closely at the needs of the most able pupils. As a result of this study you are examining how you can support some pupils to be more resilient when faced with challenging work. There are much improved opportunities for pupils to develop and use computer skills. This is because the school has invested in better quality computers and has implemented a new scheme of work. During my tour of the school I saw good examples of pupils using computers to investigate graphs and digital media to create animations.

There are stronger links now between work done in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop early writing skills and the programme used in Key Stage 1 to develop literacy. Consequently, pupils now make better progress, as teachers are quick to correct basic mistakes when pupils begin forming letter and number shapes. There are some positive improvements in the teaching of phonics and reading skills in Key Stage 1. This has resulted in many more pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check this year. However, you have recognised you do not provide enough time for pupils to develop writing skills, and results in this area are weaker. In order to address this you plan to

change the curriculum so that more time will be spent on writing.

Un-validated results at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 for 2014 suggest improvements in achievement have been consolidated, but standards in reading, writing and mathematics are still not secure, when compared to national averages. In particular, too few pupils make good progress and go on to achieve the higher levels at the end of Year 6.

Monitoring activities undertaken by senior leaders are now more focused on specific aspects of the school's provision. You are taking time to gather evidence and fully understand the current situation. Consequently, planned actions are well considered and precise. In addition, subject leaders have developed action-plans to improve provision for their areas of responsibility. All are keen to check over the next year whether the new curriculum is leading to improvements in teaching and learning. However, the school needs to plan a schedule of checks that do not over-burden teachers.

The governing body has effective systems in place to challenge senior leaders, but the performance of other members of staff has not been managed sufficiently robustly this year. In particular, some teachers have not had their performance reviewed. The school improvement committee is well informed about achievement across the school and the impact of work to improve the quality of teaching. However, the work of this committee should be aligned with the school's assessment and monitoring cycle and meet on a half-termly basis.

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 inspection the local authority has provided limited support and considers the school to have sufficient momentum to sustain its own improvement. The local authority does however need to have sufficient checks in place to assure itself the school remains on course to become a good school.

Over the last year you have built some partnerships with local schools which are proving helpful. It is your intention to strengthen these partnerships further so that leaders at all levels have access to ongoing support and development.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector