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Mrs Sarah Cairns
Headteacher
Bessacarr Primary School
Ellers Avenue
Bessacarr
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN4 7DT

Dear Mrs Cairns

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bessacarr Primary School, Doncaster

Following my visit to your school on 6 October, 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 and local authority should take action to:

- translate the findings of the review of governance into actions that further develop the capacity of the governing body to make a good contribution to the school's improvement.

The local authority should take action to:

- ensure the executive headteacher is well supported to manage the task of discharging her role as leader of two Doncaster primary schools.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, representatives of the governing body, two representatives of the local authority and a group of teachers. The school improvement plan was evaluated. In

addition, the inspector visited classrooms accompanied by the headteacher and took the opportunity to speak with pupils about their work.

Context

Since the inspection of March 2014, leadership arrangements have changed. An executive headteacher leads the school and is on-site four days a week. On the fifth day the deputy head acts as the senior member of staff at the school. The executive headteacher retains her substantive role as headteacher of Armthorpe Southfield Primary School. The two primary schools are joined in a partnership arrangement, the main aim being to support improvement at Bessacarr. Three new teachers have joined the school since and some changes have been made to the membership of the governing body.

Main findings

The executive headteacher is moving the school in the right direction. She has brought fresh ideas and has achieved a significant amount in one term. Changes in ways of working, particularly around training and support for staff, are making a difference. Teachers commented positively on the increased emphasis on training that is strengthening their classroom practice, for example in marking and assessing children's progress. They clearly value the knowledge and experience the executive headteacher brings and her hands-on approach, as one teacher commented to nods of agreement: 'she knows what she is talking about.' A facelift for the accommodation over the summer has improved the indoor environment for pupils and building work to extend the school site is well underway.

Pupils are thoughtful about their school experiences and confident to share their views. In one class pupils explained that 'maths was harder' and more enjoyable as a consequence, and science was much better this year. In another class pupils thought their mathematics work was 'quite easy' and in a third class the inspector noted a mathematics activity that was set below the capabilities of a pupil who had completed it well ahead of her classmates. Removing these inconsistencies and developing mathematics teaching is a priority that the headteacher is tackling.

The School Improvement Committee provides a useful forum for communication between the governors of both partner schools, the local authority and senior staff. This is helping governors to gain a better understanding of the school's effectiveness. Newer governors are finding their feet quickly and collectively governors are becoming better equipped to ask pertinent questions. The review of governance, recommended by the section 5 inspection, has delivered a draft report of findings. In its current form the draft is of limited value because the twenty plus findings have yet to be distilled to clear priorities within a timeframe. The governing body will also need guidance on 'how to' follow up agreed actions arising from the review in order to take maximum benefit from the exercise.

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

Prior to the section 5 inspection the local authority had not stepped in to arrest a decline in the school's effectiveness. Since March 2014 it has acted swiftly to broker a solution which is benefitting the school and beginning to demonstrate impact. The partnership arrangement with Armthorpe Southfield Primary School has begun to provide links for governors and teachers to gain first-hand experience of the quality of provision in a good school. Governors and teachers say this arrangement helps them to reflect on their own practice by observing that of others in a different setting.

The local authority has initiated a move towards a formal federation between the two schools. In moving to this arrangement it is essential that the executive headteacher and governors are well supported in managing the additional work that comes with both this process and with the completion of the new build. The local authority is able to maintain close links with the school through its continued membership of the School Improvement Committee.

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

Yours sincerely

Cathryn Kirby

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk] - for academies, free schools, UTCs and studio schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school is a non-maintained special school [hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk]