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Mrs Karen Briggs
Headteacher
Cobblers Lane Primary School
Cobblers Lane
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Dear Mrs Briggs

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cobblers Lane Primary School, Wakefield

Following my visit to your school on 24 November 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 September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- resolve the uncertainties caused by the annulment of the Key Stage 2 test results in order to rapidly increase the pace of improvement to the areas identified at the school's last full inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and middle leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a local leader for education to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement action plan was evaluated.

Main findings

The school has appropriate plans in place to tackle the key issues identified at the recent inspection and some early appropriate steps have been taken to implement them. However, two issues have emerged since the inspection which have distracted leaders and staff, consumed time and limited progress.

Firstly, a week ago, the headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body received a letter from the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) to inform them that the 2014 Key Stage 2 results have been annulled for all pupils and subjects. Following a review of the test scripts, and a report following a visit to the school by the local authority, the STA maladministration team decided that there is doubt over the accuracy of the pupils' test results. The STA has requested that the school reviews its test administration procedures and asks that the headteacher pays attention to the process in place to ensure the security of the test scripts once they have been completed and before they are sent for external marking.

The Governing Body, with the help of the local authority, is considering the letter from the STA before proposing any next steps. This incident, and the uncertainty it brings, has damaged the morale and confidence of staff. At the time of the inspection visit parents had not yet been informed.

Secondly, this term, a very few challenging pupils disrupted learning in a few classes. Senior managers have been diverted by the need to manage this behaviour and find solutions. Teaching assistants have been appropriately re-deployed and additional support from the local authority has been provided. As a result, these instances of challenging behaviour are being managed more effectively, although in one or two cases it remains a challenge.

These two issues have detracted from the appropriate and effective actions that have started to be taken by senior and middle leaders to tackle the areas for improvement from the recent inspection.

Five teachers, including an assistant headteacher, who joined the school at the beginning of term have received appropriate training and inducted in the school's teaching approaches, for example, the procedures for calculation.

A new approach to teaching reading was trialled in one class and then extended to other classes in Key Stage 2. This is beginning to extend pupils' vocabulary through increased discussion about the meaning of words. A new computer-based reading programme in Years 5 and 6 has resulted in targeted pupils reading more and with greater enthusiasm. The first evaluation of this programme will take place at the end of term. A new middle leader has started to review the teaching of letters and sounds with a view to developing a more rigorous and systematic approach.

An additional programme of writing activities has been introduced to build up pupils' ability to write at length at Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. It is too early to show impact. Leaders have worked with new members of staff to ensure that classroom walls provide pupils with models of good writing and practical guidance. Leaders report more impact in some classes than others.

Staff have received training in how to work more effectively with parents. Staff report that meetings with parents have begun to improve as a result.

Middle leaders are beginning to take on a greater role in checking the impact of particular teaching strategies and of extra support programmes.

Governors are well-informed about the school improvement plan. Adjustments have been made to prioritise the issues identified at the recent inspection. This term, the policy for school visits by governors has re-focussed on these key issues. The visits will take place when new staff have settled into their roles and the effects of current difficulties have receded. Governors reviewed the positive impact of last year's programme of extra support on pupils' progress, and identified the reasons why one programme had less 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 working appropriately with governors to decide any further steps in relation to the maladministration of tests. The local authority school improvement adviser knows the school well and has provided constructive advice and support in dealing with difficult staffing issues. She has provided helpful advice on staff structures and school systems. The headteacher has begun to draw effectively on the support of one of Wakefield's new local leaders of education to coach and develop middle leaders. He has made a promising start by guiding a new middle leader in planning a review of letters and sounds. The school is about to work with Early Excellence in Huddersfield to review transition between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell

Her Majesty's Inspector