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Mrs Christina Gunning
Headteacher
Priestthorpe Primary School
Mornington Road
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West Yorkshire
BD16 4JS

Dear Mrs Gunning

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Priestthorpe Primary School, Bradford

Following my visit to your school on 11 February 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 October 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that monitoring activities focus clearly on evaluating the impact of initiatives and the difference they are making to pupils' outcomes
- make sure that where issues are identified they are followed up robustly to bring about improvement
- sharpen the school's improvement plan to set out clearly how leaders will bring about improvements and outline milestones and criteria to enable governors to hold leaders to account more effectively
- develop the role of adults in the early years so they get the most from children's play.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your senior leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. You accompanied me on a tour of the school and we visited classrooms to look at pupils' learning. A small selection of pupils' books were scrutinised to look at improvements in mathematics along with a range of documents including records of the school's monitoring activities and minutes of governing body meetings.

Context

Since the inspection one member of staff has begun a period of maternity leave. Two members of support staff have joined the school.

Main findings

Governors, senior leaders and the local authority all agree that the judgement at the last inspection was the correct one. The drive and determination of leaders to move the school towards a better judgement at the next inspection is clear. Senior leaders have checked a great deal of the school's work, this includes observing learning, scrutinising pupils' work and discussing with teachers and pupils the improvements they are making. However, better progress is hampered because leaders have not focused sharply enough on the impact their actions are having or ensuring that issues are followed up in a more timely manner. For example, alongside training for staff, the school has introduced new approaches to the teaching of mathematics and a policy for marking pupils' work. A small scrutiny of pupils' work showed that there is still variation in the effectiveness of marking and that teachers are not all following agreed approaches to teaching. While leaders have identified this through their monitoring they have not addressed this to ensure the agreed approaches are having the desired impact. Consequently, pupils' progress in mathematics is not as strong as it is in English.

There are currently a number of vacancies on the governing body and governors have advertised these positions to help them fill the gaps they have identified in their skills and knowledge. Governors have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are positive about the improvements that have been made during the school's journey so far. However, they are clear that there is further to go. They challenge the school appropriately and have recognised that this could be better recorded in the minutes of their meetings and improved further by sharpening the school's 'Raising Attainment and Accelerating Progress Plan'. This plan addresses the correct issues which were also identified at the last inspection. However, the extent to which the plan sets out clearly what successful outcomes will look like, how leaders will go about achieving these and provides helpful criteria and

milestones to enable governors and leaders to measure improvement, needs sharpening.

Staffing arrangements in the Reception and Nursery classes have been reviewed and a more experienced teacher has moved into the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit. The Headteacher has taken over the leadership of the early years and acknowledges there is still much to be done to ensure that adults make the most of the interests, skills and understanding children bring to their learning.

The school has updated its website which provides useful information for parents particularly for news and events at the school. However, information about the curriculum and approaches to reading within school could be strengthened to provide better guidance to parents about what their children are learning.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspections.

External support

The local authority are confident that the school is moving towards being 'good' at its next inspection. As a result they have lessened the priority level at which they rate the school. The School Achievement Officer has brokered some helpful support from consultants which has enabled teachers to improve the use of assessment in their teaching and plan more effectively. While there has been valued support from the local authority, the level of challenge has not always required the school to focus strongly enough on the impact of its actions.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector