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6 March 2015

Mr Richard O'Sullivan
Headteacher
Byron Primary School
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Dear Mr O'Sullivan

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

Following my visit to your school with Stephen McMullan Her Majesty's Inspector, on 5 March 2015, 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 December 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 that targets in the action plan are specific and quantifiable and that milestones on the way to meeting these are included
- ensure that phase leaders are resourced appropriately to work towards these targets.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the Chair and two members of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. Brief visits to classrooms, accompanied by a member of the senior team, were focused on the school's new approach to teaching mathematics. A sample of pupils' work was examined with senior leaders. Documents such as

monitoring records and minutes of senior leadership team meetings were taken into account.

Main findings

Since the inspection, helpful steps have been taken to increase the school's leadership capacity by devolving some responsibilities from the most senior leaders to phase leaders. In turn, phase leaders are now supported by the recently appointed year team leaders. Phase leaders are tackling their roles with energy and enthusiasm. They are monitoring and evaluating aspects of provision and outcomes for pupils in their phases weekly. They are responding promptly when improvement is needed, for instance through support and coaching for staff. However, the links between work in phases and the targets in the school's overarching action plan are not clear enough. This is because the overarching targets are not broken down or quantified sufficiently.

Phase leaders are also playing key roles in whole-school developments, leading working parties on literacy, numeracy and the new curriculum. In January a new approach to delivering the curriculum was adopted in order to make learning more exciting. Each phase is now using a topic, such as rainforests, as the framework within which skills are taught and practised. All topics include a first-hand experience, such as a visit to a zoo, as a stimulus for learning. In each area of the school, themed displays are vibrant and hold much to capture pupils' interest. Teachers recognise that there is now a greater focus on ensuring that activities help pupils to develop essential skills. However, leaders acknowledge that more needs to be done to secure the sequential teaching and tracking of skills development for pupils.

Increased engagement in learning is also the focus of the new homework policy, introduced and shared with parents very recently. Alongside regular reading, spellings and mathematics, pupils are being challenged to complete half-termly projects, within which they have some choice and independence.

This inspection took place on World Book Day so a myriad of character costumes was in evidence, as well as events such as a readathon to promote a love of reading for pleasure. Nonetheless, it was possible to see that as a matter of course there is much in the school environment to foster enjoyment of reading. Attractive books, levelled to help pupils choose those that are accessible to them, are readily available.

A major initiative since the inspection is the development of a new curriculum in mathematics. This is linked in part to the introduction of the new National Curriculum, although the central motivation is making mathematics more relevant and engaging. Topics are shaped as problems that culminate in 'Figure it out Friday' when pupils have the opportunity to apply the skills they have been taught and practised during the week. A new approach to planning, as well as the use of

working walls, are supporting this much more personalised approach to teaching mathematics.

Through a revised policy, a proportionate approach to marking has been established. The school's monitoring shows that this is being implemented with a reasonable degree of consistency. Teachers are building in time for pupils to make corrections and respond to their comments so dialogue is beginning to develop.

Governors are clear about their role in evaluating the impact of the action plan on outcomes for pupils. Since the inspection, the governing body has begun to receive more detailed feedback on areas of the school's work through half-termly reports presented by the phase leaders. Governors say this is a helpful development, adding to the picture of the school's work they gain through first-hand monitoring, for instance of the implementation of the marking policy.

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

Until recently the school has not been allocated support by the local authority but this has changed since the inspection. Some limited support is beginning to be provided. In order to develop a new approach to mathematics, the school has been linked to a local primary school where practice is outstanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector