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Mr Mark Alston
Headteacher
Holme-upon-Spalding Moor Primary School
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Holme-upon-Spalding Moor
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North Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Alston

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Holme-upon-Spalding Moor Primary School

Following my visit with Claire Brown, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 21 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in February 2014. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children, Family and Schools for East Riding of Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Lee Owston
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014

- Increase the proportion of good teaching in order that pupils achieve well in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially in reading and mathematics
 - making sure that work set is at the right level of challenge for all pupils, especially the most-able
 - ensuring that pupils have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to problem-solving activities
 - ensuring that teachers' marking and feedback informs pupils of how they can improve their work and that time is given for them to respond to the teachers' comments.

- Ensure that all leaders including governors are more effective in driving up standards and improving rates of progress by:
 - ensuring leaders at all levels in the school gain a more accurate view of the school's performance
 - developing the role of subject leaders in checking the quality of teaching so they can become more effective in raising pupils' achievement
 - developing further the systems for tracking pupils' progress so that leaders are better able to check how well pupils are doing and are clear as to the progress made by pupils in all year groups and subjects
 - ensuring governors are better informed of the school's performance so that they can successfully challenge leaders and teachers more rigorously and hold them to account for raising achievement.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 21 April 2015

Evidence

Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, those with responsibility for English and mathematics and a group of staff. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) also spoke to the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the headteacher of an outstanding, local school who is providing external support. HMI visited six mathematics lessons to observe teaching, speak to pupils informally about their learning and look at the current standard of work in pupils' books. Two observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. HMI made a number of shorter visits to observe learning in other subjects. They also scrutinised the standard of work in pupils' books in Year 2 and Year 6 to gauge the accuracy of assessment and evaluate the quality of teaching over time. A wide range of documents were evaluated, including the school's analysis of pupils' current attainment and progress and the most recent records of the checks made on the quality of teaching.

Context

The headteacher will retire at the end of the academic year. The governing body is in the process of recruiting a replacement for September 2015. The number of children in the Nursery has recently increased. An additional, part-time member of staff has been recruited to accommodate the larger class. Two appointments to the governing body have brought its membership up to full capacity.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The quality of leadership is improving at every level. The headteacher's recent engagement with an outstanding school in the locality has provided focused support and guidance for all leaders and staff. Closer partnership working between the school, the local authority and the support school has injected much greater pace to school improvement. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and pupils' progress, especially in Year 5 and Year 6, has hastened. The current cohort of Year 6 pupils are now making the progress expected of them and are making up for the lost ground of previous years. Leaders are aware that a greater proportion of pupils now need to exceed the expected rates of progress so that they make consistently good progress and reach their full potential.

The fundamental systems and processes for checking on the work of the school are firmly established. Leaders regularly evaluate the difference new initiatives are making to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. For example, an electronic tracking tool in Key Stage 2 is allowing greater analysis of pupils' attainment and progress across subjects and for different groups of pupils, such as the most able. Analysis of this information reveals that inconsistencies remain between subjects, ability sets and pupil groups. Leaders need to extend their tracking system so that it

encompasses all pupils within the school, including those in Key Stage 1 and the early years. This will ensure greater attention to emerging whole-school issues, such as the quality of pupils' writing, rather than those specifically identified during the February 2014 inspection.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics continue to benefit from the bespoke support received through the local authority and support school. As the confidence and presence of these leaders increase, staff are beginning to turn to them for advice about improving the quality of teaching. Although middle leaders have had additional time to carry out their role, it has not been used to maximum effect. They have rightly started to evaluate the performance data presented in the new tracking tool but have not had enough opportunity to observe the quality of teaching first-hand. The variability in pupils' progress has not been linked to weaknesses in teaching so that inconsistencies in day-to-day teaching practices remain. While leaders are pleased that pupils are now making expected progress from their starting points, too few pupils make good progress overall.

Governors are beginning to hold the headteacher to account for the impact of school improvement work. The clarity and accessibility of the new tracking tool are allowing the pupil progress committee to ask increasingly pertinent questions of leaders regarding the quality of teaching and the difference it is making to pupils' progress. Governors are aware that they need to make more visits to school to verify the answers to their questions and see for themselves where inconsistencies persist.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- A package of 'non-negotiables' relating to lesson planning, assessment and feedback to pupils is providing a consistent set of expectations for teachers about the quality of teaching. Staff are rising to these higher expectations.
- Pupil progress meetings enable quicker identification of pupils who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving. Teaching assistants are providing valuable support, through small-group work, to enable identified pupils to catch up with their classmates.
- Teachers intervene during lessons to support and challenge different groups of pupils to make faster progress. Assessment information is being used more effectively to provide most pupils with the right level of work for their abilities.
- Pupils are able to recall number facts and times tables with increasing speed and accuracy. This is enabling them to think for themselves and tackle more challenging problems because they have greater confidence in using and applying number.
- Teachers provide regular feedback to pupils about their work. Pupils, particularly in mathematics, know what they have done well and where they have made errors. Time for pupils to respond to their teacher's comments is growing so they can learn from their mistakes.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The overuse of worksheets and workbooks is restricting what pupils in Key Stage 1 can achieve. As a result, middle- and higher-ability pupils do not always work at a level that matches their capabilities and progress slows.
- The accuracy of assessment in the early years needs further attention. Some staff are unclear about the knowledge, skills and understanding that would be demonstrated by a typical nursery child on entry to the school. As such, some assessments of children's starting points underestimate their capabilities.
- In some mathematics lessons, pupils are not provided with the practical equipment needed to help them understand new concepts such as fractions or percentages. Pupils are unable to visualise how these mathematical ideas interrelate because the use of visual images and diagrams is limited.
- Pupils are not always clear about what they are learning during lessons. While teachers consistently provide a learning objective, they do not convey the heart of what staff are trying to develop. For example, 'to write for a purpose' or 'be confident in the use of number' are frequently recorded but could apply to many English or mathematics lessons.

External support

Partnership working has been slow to start but is now gathering pace with the involvement of Bacon Garth Primary School. All staff have had the opportunity to visit this outstanding school and learn from best practice. Teachers particularly appreciate the opportunity to observe other colleagues and follow this up with joint working back in their own classroom. In part, teaching is improving because staff have a newfound enthusiasm through this way of working. Many articulated that they are now adapting the features of best practice they have observed for the benefit of their own pupils.

The local authority maintains an overview of progress on a termly basis. The improvement officer joins the headteacher and supporting headteacher to conduct lesson observation, work scrutiny and data analysis in order to judge the quality and effectiveness of improvement work. These opportunities have been valuable coaching experiences for the headteacher. In time, the headteacher should undertake more of these checking exercises by himself to strengthen the school's internal capacity for continuous improvement.