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Miss Georgina Haley
Headteacher
Sitlington Netherton Junior and Infant School
Netherton Lane
Netherton
Wakefield
West Yorkshire
WF4 4HQ

Dear Miss Haley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sitlington Netherton Junior and Infant School, Wakefield

Following my visit 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 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 January 2015. 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:

- sharpen the action plan to ensure it contains measurable success criteria, so that precise checks can be made on the progress the school is making
- ensure the checks leaders make are the right checks to evaluate more accurately how well the school is performing
- evaluate the impact of leaders' actions on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and achievement.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the interim headteacher; substantive headteacher; other senior and middle leaders; the Chair of the Governing Body; and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan. Accompanied by the substantive headteacher, I made visits to some lessons to look at the development and impact of the actions taken since the inspection. I scrutinised documentation relating to pupil assessment and external evaluations of the school's work.

Context

Since the inspection, one of the interim co-headteachers has left. The other interim headteacher leads and manages the school for two days a week, with the deputy headteacher taking charge for three days. The substantive headteacher is due to return from maternity leave in June 2015. The local authority is providing additional support to the school's leaders during this period of transition. Three permanent teachers are absent and temporary teachers are teaching their classes.

Main findings

There have been substantial changes to the leadership of the school overtime, which have slowed the school's progress. Since the recent section 5 inspection, there has been more change. Nevertheless, the co-headteachers and the local authority have worked on strengthening leadership so that, the deputy headteacher is in a better position to lead and manage the school for three days each week. There is a much stronger, and increasingly effective, leadership team underpinning the work of the headteacher.

During her maternity leave, the substantive headteacher maintains contact with the school and is fully aware of developments and plans. A transition programme is in place to ease this further change in leadership in June 2015.

Since the inspection, leaders have focused on the areas for improvement, most of which were already outlined in the school development plan. They are tackling weaker teaching more robustly; however, staff absence has slowed this process. Leaders have focused on supporting new teachers and checking there is compliance with the school's policies and procedures. Nevertheless, in some classes, there is little evidence to demonstrate the impact of actions on pupils' learning. For example:

- leaders have reviewed the marking policy and ensured greater consistency in the marking of English and mathematics, but have not evaluated the impact of this on pupils' learning
- the assessment leader has developed a more robust system for tracking and evaluating pupils' achievement. Teachers have the information they need to focus on meeting the needs of the most able pupils in order to raise their expectations of what these pupils can achieve. Although leaders have

checked whether teachers plan for these pupils, they have not evaluated the impact of this action on pupils' learning and progress.

Leaders have responded promptly to parental concerns about communication relating to staffing changes and curriculum development. A very recent survey of parents' views is overwhelmingly positive. This suggests there is greater confidence in the leadership of the school than was seen during the inspection.

Leaders have drafted a new plan, but this plan does not have measurable milestones so that, accurate checks can be made on the school's progress. It does not detail the kind of checks made in order to gather a complete and accurate view of the school's progress. Some of these checks focus on compliance with systems and procedures rather than tackling the precise weaknesses in teaching.

The governing body recognises the school needs stability and has taken decisive action to secure and sustain the leadership of the school and maintain good teaching. Governors continue to make checks on the school's progress by coming into school and taking part in monitoring activities such as the scrutiny of pupils' work. The Chair of the Governing Body meets leaders and staff on a weekly basis to question and challenge them about the work of the school. Consequently, he has a comprehensive knowledge of the school and the actions it is taking.

Her Majesty's Inspector will provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection, because of the changes in leadership and the instability in the staffing of teaching.

External support

The school improvement adviser has been a key player in supporting the developments and improvements seen in the organisation and work of senior and middle leadership. This means the school is in a much stronger position than it was previously. There are firm plans in place to continue to support the school by linking it with a local outstanding primary school and by increasing the level of support for leadership from the school improvement adviser. The local authority has established systems and procedures for holding the school, and those who support it, to account.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer

Her Majesty's Inspector