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Mrs Joanna Rawling  
Headteacher  
Woodthorpe Primary School  
Summerfield Road  
York  
North Yorkshire  
YO24 2RU

Dear Mrs Rawling

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodthorpe Primary School, York**

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 March 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:

- Strengthen school planning to ensure that actions, timescales and success measures are sharply defined to ensure that the pace of improvement does not falter.
- Ensure that checks by school leaders are securely focussed on the impact teaching has on the learning of the most able pupils, those who are disabled or have special educational needs and the disadvantaged, in order to accurately pinpoint where further work is needed.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, and representatives of the Governing Body and the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and the outcomes of monitoring activities were reviewed. A tour of the school was undertaken.

## **Context**

Staffing changes since the section 5 inspection have been limited: one teacher left at Easter and the early year's class is taught by a part-time teacher within the school who has increased her hours. Further staff changes are planned: the headteacher is leaving at the end of the summer term and a designate headteacher has been appointed for 1<sup>st</sup> September. An assistant headteacher, who is also the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), is leaving at the end of term.

## **Main findings**

Although staff and governors were disappointed with the outcome of the last inspection, morale throughout the school is high. Everyone is determined the school will become a good school by the next inspection. The senior leadership team is working with determination to make sure that the momentum of improvement, evident during the past year, is maintained and continues to build. Actions to tackle the aspects of leadership and of teaching that are not yet good are taking place, although the detail, particularly in terms of specific timescales and success measures, is not always spelt out clearly enough in school plans. In discussion during this monitoring inspection, the further refinement of plans, together with the need for a sharper focus to check the impact the school's work has on pupils' learning was acknowledged. Leaders reflected on how they might usefully adapt the planned monitoring programme this term to better focus on the most able pupils, those who are disabled or have special educational needs, and the disadvantaged.

Expectations of teachers have been restated and a multi-faceted programme of training and support to enable all middle leaders to develop the generic and specialist skills needed to do their roles has started. Measures are in place to ensure a smooth handover of leadership to the new headteacher and SENCO. Regular discussions are taking place to ensure that plans and key decisions are taken jointly between the headteacher and the designate headteacher. An investigation is taking place, with the support of the local authority, to determine how to improve the achievement of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. Some improvements have already been made since the last inspection and gaps in progress between pupils with special educational needs and their classmates are closing rapidly in Year 2 and Year 6.

School data shows more pupils are achieving at the higher levels in both key stages and the school are forecasting improved results in the forthcoming performance tests.

Governors are working closely with the literacy leader to ensure that actions to improve writing are more swiftly and sharply focused in order to tackle concerns when attainment and progress starts to slow for some pupils. Modifications to the way in which school assessment data is analysed has taken place and a new initiative to rapidly accelerate progress for less able writers has begun in Key Stage 1. Staff are responding to guidance regarding the teaching of handwriting and presentation and are implementing marking policies with more consistency.

Governors are starting to look at how they could sharpen their scrutiny and be more rigorous in challenging leaders. An external review of the use of the pupil premium funding has been commissioned to assist the school in identifying how to narrow the gaps in attainment and progress. The review, led by a local leader in education, is scheduled to begin in the next few weeks.

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

### **External support**

The school are drawing upon advice and guidance from specialist staff from the local authority. The first in a series of focused visits to examine why progress slows for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs has already taken place, and leaders are quickly acting upon the recommendations made. Additional support from good and outstanding schools is being arranged through the Ebor teaching school alliance. However, at the time of this monitoring inspection, specific details of the support and information as to how governors and the local authority would check the rigour and impact of this work were still being developed.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White

**Her Majesty's Inspector**