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Mr David Silvester
Executive Headteacher
Wath Victoria Primary School
Sandymount Road
Wath-upon-Dearne
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S63 7AD

Dear Mr Silvester

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wath Victoria Primary School, Rotherham

Following my visit to your school on 1 May 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2013. 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 more teaching is at least good by the time of the next inspection
- Improve attendance.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, three representatives of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A tour was made of classes with the executive headteacher. Data about pupils' progress was scrutinised.

Context

In January 2015, the headteacher of Wath CofE Primary School became the executive headteacher. The strategic governance group, composed of the chairs and vice-chairs of the governing bodies of Wath Victoria and Wath CofE, has agreed to extend the executive headteacher's contract to three years. An absent teacher has resigned. Work on a new school building is due to start in June, to be completed in 2016.

Main findings

The executive headteacher's enthusiasm, expertise and diplomacy have built on the progress that the school had been making under the headteacher. The learning environment is more stimulating, with better use of classroom displays to support learning. Teachers are using clearer and more precise statements about what pupils are learning which is resulting in more-focused and better-structured lessons. This approach is also enabling pupils and teachers to assess understanding and skills more accurately during lessons. A more consistent approach and stronger guidance are helping to improve the presentation of pupils' work. Cursive handwriting is an area for further development.

The executive headteacher has recognised the strengths in teaching and is skilful in pointing out and showing how it could be better. As a result, teachers are growing in confidence and are keener to improve their practice. Teachers are focusing more sharply on the needs of individual pupils and are tackling them more quickly.

The deputy headteacher is leading improvement in mathematics with energy and determination. Since September, she has developed the use of models and images to teach calculation more effectively and has devised a new scheme of work to teach fractions more successfully. Following observation of visiting teachers from China, the school is using pre-learning activities to prepare less confident pupils' to learn a new skill. In addition, the school is taking faster action to tackle any confusions in the morning's mathematics lesson by providing extra teaching in the afternoon. These two strategies are benefiting weaker pupils, including some disadvantaged pupils. A new software programme, used at school and home, is improving pupils' success in mental mathematics. As a result of effective professional development, progress in mathematics is accelerating across the school.

New approaches to reading and writing, adopted in September, have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Because pupils are learning to apply different strategies for reading, they are more able to think and talk about the meaning of text. As a result, progress in reading has increased across the school.

Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress has been checked more rigorously to ensure its accuracy. School data shows that pupils' progress is improving and attainment is rising.

Attendance has improved but remains well below average. Leaders are targeting more diligently those who are persistently absent. The executive headteacher is planning to increase the use of parent support advisers to promote good attendance.

The Department for Education sent Wath Victoria a letter to highlight the poor performance of disadvantaged pupils in 2014 and recommended working with a more successful school. At the same time, Wath CofE was congratulated for the good performance of disadvantaged pupils. The executive headteacher plans to deploy the strategies he has used to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils. In particular, he is proposing an on-site speech therapist for younger pupils, and a mental health worker to help children and families overcome events or difficulties that interfere with learning. Recent data indicates that disadvantaged pupils are achieving better this year and gaps are narrower across the school.

Governors have worked effectively with the governors at Wath CofE to set up and manage the school partnership. A joint, long-term plan promises a more secure future for the school. Governors are agreeing a new leadership and staffing structure.

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

Staff at all levels have responded positively to the direction and optimism of the executive headteacher. Work with the partner school has improved the professional development of teaching assistants, teachers and middle leaders. New approaches to teaching are being successfully adopted and adapted from the partner school.

The valuable professional development provided by the South Yorkshire Maths Hub is being used effectively to improve the teaching of mathematics and raise pupils' achievement.

The local authority brokered an effective local school partnership. Local authority consultants withdrew as the partner school took on the responsibility for professional development. The local authority is appropriately providing lighter touch monitoring.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector