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Mrs Ruth Wackett
Headteacher
Snainton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Pickering Road
Snainton
Scarborough
North Yorkshire
YO13 9AF

Dear Mrs Wackett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Snainton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 29 June 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 February 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure that the school improvement plan includes specific actions, success criteria and milestone targets which are aligned to the intended impact on pupils' learning and progress
- access external support for senior and middle leaders to carry out their roles more effectively
- establish a small school improvement governing body committee to evaluate how quickly and effectively the headteacher is securing improvements in relation to those areas identified at the time of the previous inspection

- urgently tackle the inconsistencies in marking and feedback to improve the quality and quantity of pupils' work
- ensure that the monitoring of classroom practice focuses on learning and the contribution that teaching makes to it.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders for English and mathematics, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans, English and mathematics subject leaders' plans and the school system for checking pupil progress were evaluated. Other documents were scrutinised including the outcomes of the school's monitoring activities, reports to governors and local authority notes of visit.

Context

The school has encountered some difficulties in maintaining a constant staffing structure in the past. However, staffing has not changed this academic year, and is set to remain unchanged for the next academic year starting September 2015.

Main findings

School leaders have not acted with enough urgency or decisiveness following the section 5 inspection. A school improvement plan has been developed, but it does not address clearly all of the issues raised at the previous inspection. The actions do not have measurable outcomes and the criteria which have been set to monitor the improvements are not challenging or robust enough. Due to this, governors are unable to keep a close check on how well the actions taken are improving the progress of pupils across the school.

Leaders' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Staff are committed to making the necessary improvements, and know what is expected of them due to roles and responsibilities being made clearer, however they are not sufficiently clear about how to make the required improvements.

Governors are committed to the school. Following the inspection judgement, they resolved to further develop their knowledge and skill to hold school leaders to account. Governors regularly ask searching questions and challenge senior leaders, particularly in relation to how well pupils are achieving. However, governors recognise that the response they receive is not always acceptable. Governors have accessed some support from the local authority to develop their effectiveness but rightly feel they require more. In addition, they recognise the need for urgent external support to help drive the rapid improvements required in leadership, achievement and teaching and are exploring their options.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics have started to look at strategies to improve the quality of teaching across the school. For example, the maths leader has implemented a new approach to the teaching and assessment of mental mathematics, and the English leader has implemented a new strategy to improve pupils' spelling skills. The impact of these improvements have not been monitored or evaluated. This is limiting the capacity to improve further.

Systems for checking the quality of teaching over time are now in place. However, observations of teaching are not focusing specifically enough on how much the pupils are learning. Therefore, actions to improve are not resulting in improved pupil outcomes, particularly in Key Stage 2. An improved performance management system has been implemented and teachers are now going to be held to account for improving pupils' outcomes. It is too soon to see the impact of this work.

Leaders have implemented a revised policy for marking and feedback in order to set higher expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. While some teachers are using this effectively, particularly the use of self-assessment in Key Stage 1, others are not. This needs to be addressed immediately.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. My intention is to return to the school in due course in order to evaluate the actions leaders are taking to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement.

External support

Leaders have made a slow start in drawing upon external support from outside the school. The headteacher has brokered some school-to-school support from a local outstanding primary school, West Heslerton, where staff have visited to look at good practice in open-ended learning. The local authority has brokered support for school improvement through the Esk Valley Alliance. However, there has only been one session with middle leaders to develop subject leadership, and the strategies for future involvement have not been planned. As the local authority's involvement is to monitor and evaluate the impact of this support, they need to act urgently to provide a cohesive support plan to enable leaders to make the necessary improvements. The lack of structured, focused support has meant that the school is not taking the correct, swift actions to improve. The impact of further support will be reviewed at the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Lithgow
Her Majesty's Inspector