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30 November 2015

Mr David Richardson
Scawthorpe Sunnyfields Primary School
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Dear Mr Richardson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Scawthorpe Sunnyfields Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 November 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 May 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with yourself, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the governing body and two representatives from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and subject action plans were evaluated. You accompanied me on a learning walk around all the classes where we scrutinised work in books and on display. I analysed your monitoring files, teacher profiles and a range of other documents.

Context

Since the last inspection a new deputy headteacher has been appointed and one newly qualified teacher has joined the school.

Main findings

The headteacher is determined to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. He has reviewed and refined systems to ensure rigour and consistency, and is involving and developing leaders at all levels to ensure that the school moves forward quickly. The headteacher has secured an enthusiastic leadership team and an increasingly knowledgeable and challenging governing body. Relationships are strong and leaders at all levels share a common aim to improve standards and ensure that the quality of teaching improves quickly. Leaders place the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the heart of all they do.

Clear and transparent systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching. All leaders carry out formal and informal observations. Book scrutinies have become a regular activity at 'staff development meetings' where standards are compared across the school. This is improving teachers' capacity to really understand what is expected at each age and stage and further raise expectations. Regular pupils' progress meetings ensure that groups of pupils are identified and support targeted to address need. All this information is then pulled together by the headteacher to form an overview of performance for all staff. This allows teachers to see where they are performing well, but also to identify any areas in which they need to improve.

Governors are increasingly confident to check information for themselves and are not solely reliant on information given by the headteacher. For example, one governor told how he had become the chair of a new committee which sets its own agenda and challenges the work of the school. Governors are active within the school and undertake visits to classrooms and observe meetings, all of which is deepening their knowledge of how the school works.

Middle leaders are developing well as a team, able to confidently take on responsibility for improving key areas of work in their detailed action plans. Middle leaders are relishing this opportunity to extend their skills and talk enthusiastically about their role and the impact they are having. They talk of the benefits they have experienced under the guidance and leadership of the headteacher, such as teamwork, consistency of approach and a more accurate view of assessment.

The school development plan is now concise and addresses the areas for improvement. The plan includes helpful success criteria and milestones by which leaders and governors can check the impact of actions taken to improve the school. Governors have a clear picture of what the school priorities are and how they will be involved in monitoring the work of the school.

Leaders have developed the use of 'challenge' tasks which help to deepen pupils' learning. One pupil told me that he likes the challenge tasks because they make him feel confident he understands the work. Teachers are becoming more consistent in ensuring that marking picks up errors and helps pupils' skills develop. In one book

the teacher had identified that a child was not using semicolons correctly; further practice was provided and from that point the child used them correctly in her work.

Pupils' books show that teachers' expectations are increasing and work on presentation is beginning to have an impact, although this is stronger in mathematics than in English. Handwriting development still has some distance to go because, although there is evidence of an improved writing style in some books, this is not evident across the whole school. Pupils are not readily applying what they have learnt in their handwriting lessons to other work.

The school has targeted working with parents as a priority to ensure that pupils get support from home and that parents know how to support them. Teachers are now running courses to help parents understand how they teach mathematics and phonics, which parents say have been helpful.

The continued work on behaviours for learning is having an impact throughout the school. During the inspection all pupils were on task. They were involved in their learning, well behaved and enjoying their work.

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

You make effective use of a variety of external support. You use the wider pyramid of schools to secure your judgements of teaching quality and you moderate work with other schools. The local authority has provided funding for a local leader to work alongside you and support you with your school development plan and with ensuring the accuracy of your assessment information. You have planned a full school review in the spring term, which the local authority is funding.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Doncaster Metropolitan Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Lunn
Her Majesty's Inspector