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Mr Paul Lidbury
Cliffedale Primary School
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Dear Mr Lidbury

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cliffedale Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 March 2015. 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 in order to become a good school. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that governors draw up a schedule to begin checking that teaching is improving so that outcomes for pupils are consistently good or better
- ensure that the new tracking system is used effectively to check that disadvantaged pupils are making accelerated progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the senior leadership team, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work. I examined the recent external reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium. I also toured the school with you to see lessons taking place in different classes, and

examined the school's records of safeguarding checks on staff, governors and volunteers.

Context

Since the last inspection, you have appointed a new deputy headteacher, who joined in April 2015, and a new coordinator for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. A new Chair of the Governing Body has also been appointed, who was previously the vice-chair.

Main findings

You and the governors have written a series of comprehensive action plans that are correctly focused on the areas for improvement identified at the inspection. You have wasted no time in implementing some important first steps to ensure that both teaching and leadership improve. There are early signs that these are beginning to make a positive difference to the outcomes for your pupils. The school is a positive learning environment and the pupils I saw in all the classrooms that we visited were working hard and clearly enjoying their learning.

You have ensured that leadership responsibilities are being shared throughout the school. Teachers are forming groups to take shared responsibility for curriculum areas and are excited at the prospect of becoming more involved. Teachers whom I met say that they are helping each other to improve and are working increasingly as a team to ensure that the school becomes good. You have challenged all teachers to improve and are monitoring that this is beginning to happen across the school.

You and the governors have ensured that the reviews of both governance and the use of the pupil premium have taken place. You have found the process useful and agree with the conclusions of both reviews. You agree that previously, funding was not always used effectively to narrow the gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school as well as other pupils nationally. However, you are now confident that this funding is 'ring-fenced' for disadvantaged pupils and that the support these pupils are receiving is more effective. You have agreed a new tracking system to check that this is the case. If any pupil does not make sufficient progress, you and the governors are clear that the support they receive must be adjusted so that it is effective in helping pupils to catch up.

Governors have now reorganised themselves and, following training, have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Recent minutes of the governing body that I looked at showed that governors are now challenging you and senior leaders more effectively. While governors are now more visible in school, they have not yet begun to systematically check pupils' progress by looking at pupils' work or by visiting lessons with you.

Staff now have higher expectations of pupils and are ensuring that they are increasingly challenged in their work. Some weaker teaching remains, but you have a clear idea about where this exists and you are putting in some effective support to ensure that it is improving. The new deputy headteacher, who has a responsibility for developing teaching and learning, is working with you to help those teachers whose teaching is not yet good to improve.

Teachers are now asking more questions that make pupils think deeply. Pupils say that this is still not always the case, however, and some of the questions that teachers ask them do not challenge them sufficiently. Most teachers are following the school's plan to give pupils targets to show them what they need to improve next. Those pupils whom I met during my visit want to be given good advice and say that having targets helps them. A minority of pupils do not yet have targets and some others are unsure of what their targets are.

The school's new marking policy, which staff have written with you, is being widely followed. Pupils say that they like the new system of marking and understand the symbols that teachers are writing in their exercise books, along with teachers' comments. Pupils say that these both let them know when they have learnt new things. In addition, teachers are now insisting on a high level of accuracy in pupils' work, and will ask pupils to correct mis-spellings and other errors when they happen. Pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons. They are proud of the work that they complete and say that they have noticed an improvement in how they are supported in their lessons. Pupils are completing an appropriate amount of extended writing in their English books. In addition, in some year groups there is evidence of increasing opportunities for extended writing in other subjects too.

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 local authority has worked effectively with the school to help it improve. Advisers have helped organise training so that governors can understand their roles and responsibilities. They have attended governors' meetings to help governors draw up action plans to ensure that they become effective. In addition, advisers have facilitated a useful partnership with a national leader of education. This leader has visited the school to deliver good practice and has allowed staff at Cliffedale to visit her school to see high-quality learning environments. Staff have then begun to use some of these ideas in their own classrooms. The adviser is fully committed to ensuring that appropriate support from the local authority continues so that the school becomes good as quickly as possible.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector