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Mrs K Buckley
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Buckley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Priory Lane Community School

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 June 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. The school should take further action to:

- Ensure assessment methods continue to be developed to measure pupils' progress accurately, and that the results are disseminated, so that all teachers can adapt lessons appropriately, and governors have an accurate picture of the impact of teaching.
- Support middle leaders in developing an accurate view of the school's assessment information so they are better placed to improve teaching and pupils' achievement in their subject area.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke with a representative from the local authority. The single improvement plan and short term action plans were evaluated. Pupils' views were obtained in a meeting and also in lessons and at lunchtime.

Context

There have been several changes made to staffing since the Ofsted inspection. Three teachers have left the school and have been replaced by three newly qualified teachers. A further teacher is to leave at the end of term and a new teacher has been appointed, to start in January. Three new middle leaders have joined the leadership team.

The school has formed a federation with Westcliffe Primary school. The interim education board has been disbanded and a new governing body is in place, consisting of members from both Westcliffe Primary and Priory Lane Community schools. Members of the governing body have been carefully recruited to contribute a range of skills and to provide challenge and support to school leaders.

Main findings

- You, the head of school and the assistant headteacher have made a good start in raising expectations of what pupils can achieve. Leaders have worked alongside teachers, modelling effective teaching and giving teachers individual targets to work on. As a result of this bespoke approach, improvements in teaching can be seen.
- Evidence in books supports the school's view that pupils are making better progress. Leaders have promoted a rigorous approach to assessment, introducing new systems and moderating results. Due to improved accuracy in assessment, teachers have a better understanding of where pupils are. They are beginning to adapt lessons to plug gaps in learning, but this is having greater impact in some classes than others.
- The assessment leader has a good grasp of the attainment of all groups of pupils. He has provided each teacher with targets for the levels pupils will reach by the end of the year, making high expectations explicit. Leaders and staff have effectively addressed previous concerns about the reliability of assessment data. However, governors are not well placed to hold leaders to account for the impact of teaching on pupils' progress because assessment information is not available to them in an accessible form.

- Leaders have simplified the marking of English and mathematics so that teachers have a better understanding of how to help pupils to improve. The marking of mathematics now helps pupils to practise new concepts and to reinforce learning. There is considerable evidence in lessons and in pupils' books to suggest that the most-able pupils are being challenged in mathematics. The level of challenge is less obvious in writing. Teachers' marking in English is less well developed and as a result some of the most able pupils are not making rapid enough progress.
- Leaders introduced a new handwriting scheme at the start of this term. They have evaluated this and improvements in handwriting and presentation are already being seen.
- Leaders have taken urgent action to reduce the dependency of pupils on additional adults. Activities are now devised to encourage pupils to develop their independent learning skills and teachers' use of additional 'challenge questions' are raising pupils' expectations that they will complete extra work. Additional adults are being used effectively to address the immediate learning needs of pupils as they arise during lessons. The 'intervention board' signposts to additional adults which pupils they need to support that day, and what concepts pupils need to learn. Children in the early years and Year 1 are also beginning to develop independence, but the quality of provision varies between classes, meaning that not all children in the early years can make rapid progress.
- Leaders are aware of the urgent need to develop middle leaders. However, leaders are cautious about relinquishing control to middle leaders until they are ready to take on the roles and perform them well. Leaders have encouraged middle leaders to attend a range of training, and are providing coaching, pairing them up with experienced middle leaders from their partner school in order to rapidly develop their capacity to drive improvement.

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 provides regular support for Priory Lane Community School. The representative of the local authority has worked closely with you and the head of school, supporting and helping you both to evaluate with accuracy how well the school is providing for pupils, reviewing teaching in all classes and helping teachers to improve their practice. School leaders have responded to and implemented suggestions from the local authority education standards board. This board meets regularly to discuss progress and advise school leaders.

You make good use of the skills of staff from Westcliffe Primary school to support the development of individual teachers. This support is now being deployed to develop the new middle leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector