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Miss Sarah Dixon
Barwic Parade Community Primary School
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Dear Miss Dixon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Barwic Parade Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 in May 2013, 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 in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A discussion also took place with the headteacher from Selby Community Primary School who is working in close partnership with the school. Together, we visited classrooms and looked at the work in children's books. I scrutinised the school's improvement plans and reviewed documentation including that relating to the impact of monitoring activities and performance management.

Context

You took up post in September 2015, and have subsequently restructured the leadership team. The local authority has brokered the support of leading practitioners from neighbouring schools to work in collaboration with you.

Following the previous inspection, the deputy headteacher led and managed the school as acting headteacher during the summer term. She has since reverted to the deputy headteacher post and is currently the acting special educational needs coordinator covering the absence of the postholder.

Main findings

Now that roles and responsibilities are clear, you are responding to the school's need for improvement rapidly and with determination. However, significant changes in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection had hampered the pace with which improvements priorities had been tackled until recently. Your actions are based on an astute, insightful and accurate understanding of the priorities for improvement and you have clearly communicated non-negotiable, high expectations to all. Your persuasive leadership has reinvigorated staff and governors; consequently, a shared vision and drive for improvement is tangible.

Governance has been weak. The local authority has begun, but not concluded, the process of reviewing the work of the governing body. This means that the effectiveness of governors in supporting and challenging the school remains lacking. Nevertheless, governors are beginning to recognise why their impact has been limited and are committed to developing an improved understanding of their responsibilities and roles. They have recently secured opportunities to work with the new headteacher, whose vision they share. An appreciation of the school's position and the part governors must play to secure improvement is thereby emerging.

The school development plan exemplifies your clarity of understanding of the key issues faced by the school and you have correctly incorporated the priority areas for improvement from the previous inspection recommendations. This said, the plan now needs to be tightened appreciably, identifying clearly those who will be held to account for progress against the plan and making more explicit the intended outcomes for groups of pupils across the school and across subjects. Further detail will ensure that all parties are certain about what needs to be achieved and when.

Teaching and learning continues to require improvement. You have begun to tackle the underlying issues appropriately by tightening monitoring and performance management procedures in order to support and challenge staff. This is beginning to impact on the quality and consistency of planning and marking as well as aspects of teaching and learning in some classes. The aspects of teaching that continue to require improvement, however, need to reduce significantly and swiftly.

The impact of work to build the skills of the wider leadership team is emerging, as responsibility for monitoring subjects and tracking the progress of pupils is now accepted practice. However, this work to foster devolved leadership is in its early stages and leadership at all levels will need to develop rapidly if raised standards and better outcomes for pupils are to be assured, particularly in reading and mathematics.

A review of the use of pupil premium funding has identified the positive impact of spending on aspects of pupils' attitudes and behaviours. However, although interventions have taken place to support pupils, an evaluation of these initiatives has not taken place, particularly in Key Stage 2, where gaps in reading and mathematics are not closing rapidly enough.

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

Since September 2015, the quality of the support from the local authority, a senior leader in education, your mentor and the headteacher of Selby Community Primary School has been instrumental in driving improvement. Joint monitoring of teaching and learning, for example, has supported the pace of improvement. All parties acknowledge that there has been 'a slow start' in terms of supporting the school to move forward; however, an understanding of the need for urgency is now shared.

The local authority has provided effective support by brokering, for example, partnership with Selby Community Primary School to support the school's journey to 'good'. The local authority has also initiated a review of governance and the pupil premium, contributing thereby to the shaping of the school's improvement planning. Mathematics and English advisors from the local authority services have also impacted on this planning as well as practices in the school.

The school should take further action to:

- sharpen the school improvement plan so that lines of accountability are more clearly defined, including clearly spelling out the pace with which improvement is expected, and ensuring the heightened expectations in terms of pupils' outcomes and progress are unambiguously stated
- refine assessment and tracking systems in order to ascertain whether progress and outcomes for all groups of pupils, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 2, are moving forward with required urgency, particularly in mathematics and English
- increase the capacity and skills of the governing body to support and challenge leaders effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona M Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector