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Mr Simon Sloan
Headteacher
Battleyford Church of England (VC) Primary School
Nab Lane
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Dear Mr Sloan

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Battleyford Church of England (VC) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 January 2016, 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 July 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and a national leader of education to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. In addition to this, I conducted a telephone meeting with a representative from the local authority. The school development plan and the school's system for checking pupils' progress were evaluated. Other documents were scrutinised including the outcomes of monitoring activities, reports to governors and local authority notes of visits.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. The deputy headteacher, who was seconded from a local school during the last academic year on a temporary basis, now holds the substantive role. Two teachers have left and three new teachers have joined the school team. There has been a significant restructuring of the leadership team, with new phase leaders in early years, Key Stage 1, lower Key Stage 2 and upper Key Stage 2.

Main findings

There is a very strong desire by senior leaders and governors to improve this school at a rapid pace. You have brought relevant skills, experience and a new sense of urgency, purpose and commitment, which has already had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in a relatively short period of time.

Both you and the deputy headteacher are very clear about what needs to be done and have identified realistic yet aspirational actions in the school development plan to bring about improvement. These actions are already starting to impact rapidly on the standards reached by pupils, because all members of staff have heightened their expectations about what pupils can achieve. The school development plan is easily accessible to all governors, and they use it to good effect – challenging and questioning senior leaders as new monitoring and performance information is made available to them. This ensures that senior leaders are not given any room to slacken their focus and drive, and nor do they.

Capacity within the whole-school leadership team has been significantly strengthened. Middle leaders have been given clear support, training through the Teaching School Alliance and mentoring from the headteacher and deputy headteacher to ensure that they can develop fully into their role. The leadership is structured so that all leaders work collaboratively on every aspect of school improvement. This ensures that you are checking the effectiveness of their work extremely regularly, as well as identifying further training and support requirements.

Leaders have driven forward improvements in the early years and across Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading and mathematics. Internal, high-quality training from you and the deputy headteacher, visits to outstanding providers in the local area and tailored, bespoke support for those teachers and support staff who need it have ensured that pupils' achievement is rising very quickly. Purposeful guided reading sessions, raising the profile of reading through the newly designed library facility, and well-chosen resources have excited and engaged pupils to want to read more. The teaching of reading is now focused on deepening pupils' understanding and this is impacting positively on standards overall. In mathematics, a focus on improving fluency and problem solving had been identified for staff development, which resulted in recent

whole-staff training. During a learning walk, it was evident that this training is being put into action straight away, and is already motivating and engaging pupils who are relishing the challenge. These professional development opportunities have inspired teachers to continually look for ways to develop and extend learning for all pupils and, as a result, staff are better informed about what pupils need to learn to accelerate progress and they have the skills, ideas and resources to do this.

Robust and rigorous systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning are now in place. Weekly drop-in visits to most classes by you, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher result in 'Goldilocks' feedback – just the right amount at the right time. This ensures that strategies to improve teaching are acted on immediately. This information is also now being used to identify where individual teachers require support. An improved performance management system is now in place and teachers are being held to account for improving pupils' outcomes.

External support

The local authority has provided and brokered support for this school effectively. They have ensured that school leaders are being successfully supported by a national leader of education from a national teaching school, Scissett Church of England (VA) First School, which is part of the Yorkshire Anglican Teaching School Alliance. This support is validating the judgements of senior leaders in the schools, and is playing a pivotal role in shaping the support and training for middle leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales, and the Director of Children's Services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Lithgow
Her Majesty's Inspector