

21 October 2015

Miss M King
Headteacher
Thornton Primary School
Main Street
Thornton
Coalville
LE67 1AH

Dear Miss King

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thornton Primary School.

Following my visit to your school on 1 October 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit is the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement, identified at the last section 5 inspection, in order to become a good academy.

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that urgent action is taken to:

- improve the working relationship between you and the governing body to enable you to focus fully on leading the academy effectively
- ensure that an external review of governance is conducted, as identified in the last section 5 inspection, to improve the leadership and management of the school
- secure the academy's financial position
- revise the academy's action plan to ensure that it includes clear success criteria to enable governors to more stringently hold leaders to account for their work
- implement an action plan for pupil premium expenditure with clear success criteria so that the impact of actions can be measured

- ensure that high quality external support is secured to help you to improve the quality of the school's leadership
- ensure that the academy's website has all the required information for parents and carers
- ensure that the academy's website has an evaluation of the impact of pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils' attainment compared to non-disadvantaged pupils
- track the progress of the more-able pupils
- ensure consistent application of the academy's marking policy to support pupils' accelerated progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, subject leaders for English and mathematics, and two members of the governing body, including the Chair, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I scrutinised a range of documents and visited every classroom. I also looked at pupils' work and held a discussion with a group of pupils about their work. Six members of the governing body attended the feedback meeting with you at the end of my visit.

Context

Since the last inspection two teachers who job share have returned to teach in Year 1. One member of the governing body has resigned and three new parent governors have been appointed.

Main findings

The academy's leadership is in disarray. As a result of the poor working relationship between the governing body and the headteacher, the school is not being led effectively. The areas for improvement identified at the most recent section 5 inspection have not been addressed well enough, or rapidly enough. Consequently, the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils is not closing, particularly in mathematics. The performance of the most-able pupils is not being tracked and the academy does not know if this group is making good progress.

The academy's action plan does not contain clear success criteria by which governors can hold leaders to account for the actions they take. The action plan does not specifically target support for the most-able pupils. Timescales for when actions are due to be completed are not tight enough to impact positively on pupil progress and it is not always clear who is checking whether actions have been completed. The weaknesses in the academy's action plan are also evident in the pupil premium action plan. I have asked you to rewrite both documents, discuss the plans with governors and send them to me by 31 October 2015.

The external review of governance has not taken place. As a result, governors have not assessed how their leadership and management can improve to support the

improved progress of pupils. The academy's financial position is of concern and needs to be addressed quickly.

The expectations of staff are too low and therefore pupils do not make good progress as they move through the school. Some pupils told me that they find the work too easy. Children typically arrive at school with abilities that are typical for their age. At the end of the early years, the outcomes are consistently above national averages. However, progress slows in Years 1 and 2, and outcomes at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with national averages. Unconfirmed information, from the end of Key Stage 2 assessments in 2015, shows that pupils attain below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.

There are signs that pupils' attitudes to learning are improving. For example, pupils are taking more pride in how they present their work. However, pupils do not routinely correct their spellings, or act upon the advice the teachers have given them. Pupils say that not all teachers give them time to respond to teachers' marking.

Assessment information is not collated and analysed in a format by which governors can hold academy leaders to account for the progress of different groups of pupils. Subject leaders are passionate about leading their subjects. However, they have not checked to see if the improvements they have tried to implement have impacted positively on the quality of teaching. They have not tracked the progress of pupils through the school, which means opportunities for additional support to meet the needs of specific groups of pupils are being missed.

The academy's website is not compliant with government requirements. For example, the pupil premium statement does not include how well disadvantaged pupils are attaining compared to the non-disadvantaged pupils, as it is required to do. In addition, the website does not include: a statement about the academy's promotion of British values, an equal opportunities policy, an accessibility plan or information about how the academy provides for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

External support

The external review of the academy's use of pupil premium funding has been conducted. However, the action plan following the review is not fit for purpose. The academy receives no regular external support and challenge to improve the quality of leadership.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch
Her Majesty's Inspector