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Mr David Sims
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Dear Mr Sims

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Osmotherley Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 March 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 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 last section 5 inspection, in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the assistant headteacher, middle leaders, three governors, including the chair of the governing body, a local leader for education (LLE) and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. We visited classrooms together, spoke with pupils and looked at pupils' work. A range of documents were scrutinised, including records relating to the monitoring of teaching and governing body minutes. I checked documentation and information linked to safeguarding.

Context

Since the inspection, Osmotherley Primary School has become part of the Mount Grace Federation, along with Ingleby Arncliffe Church of England VA School, and Swainby and Potto Church of England VA School. There is one governing body across all three schools.

Main findings

There is an increased focus on pupils' progress, which is beginning to pay dividends. Teachers are using the recently introduced assessment recording system to plan work which better matches pupils' needs. Moderation of teachers' assessments is taking place across the three schools and this is starting to increase the accuracy of assessment judgements. Moderation of work with schools beyond the federation is not yet in place.

Teachers are setting more clear expectations of the quality of work required and how much work is to be completed within the time available. Pupils are responding to this positively. This is starting to improve how hard pupils work and the quality of their writing.

Improving teacher feedback is helping to move pupils' learning forward more effectively. Well-timed advice during lessons and marking of work in pupils' books is supporting improvements in their work. Increased opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback are beginning to improve the quality of their work in writing and mathematics. On occasions, some of the marking does not fully follow the school's marking policy and this reduces the impact on learning.

There are increasing opportunities for all pupils to answer teachers' questions. Training on questioning and the development of pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics is enhancing teachers' skills in these areas. Teachers are now using a wider range of approaches when questioning pupils. As a result, pupils are better challenged to think about their responses and their learning is deepening.

Early years provision is improving. The assistant headteacher is bringing about effective changes following advice and support from local authority advisers. The indoor provision has an improved range of opportunities for children to develop their reading, writing and number skills. Staff regularly involve the children with the planning of the provision. As a result, children are more motivated to engage with the activities provided to further their learning and develop independent learning skills. The outdoors learning area is not as well developed, and learning opportunities to improve reading, writing and number are not as evident.

Recording of children's assessments in early years is being refined and is starting to provide staff with an improved approach to recording children's progress. The

children's learning journals are beginning to provide evidence of clear progress, particularly in writing. Evidence of developing number work is more limited.

Middle leaders have begun to check the impact of training and improvements in teaching on a more regular basis. This is starting to identify the impact of actions taken to improve pupils' achievement. At present, some of these approaches are not yet systematic enough and do not follow through rigorously on findings. For example, checks on books had found the same area for improvement in successive reviews.

You have put in place a plan to address the areas for improvement in the previous inspection report. While the plan includes appropriate actions, it could be improved by identifying more specific timeframes for some actions, and being clearer about who is responsible and accountable for completion of actions.

The school promptly commissioned an external review of governance which was completed by the North Yorkshire local authority governance manager. Governors are responding well to the review recommendations. They are improving their understanding of the school's information on pupil progress. Recent identification of link governors to liaise with middle leaders aims to provide governors with a better view of the impact of school improvement actions. However, formalised systems to hold middle leaders to account for pupils' achievement are not well developed.

External support

The school has benefited from a range of well-coordinated support from North Yorkshire local authority and Swaledale Teaching Alliance. This has included school-to-school support from a national leader in education (NLE) and a local leader in education (LLE). The support is beginning to improve the quality of teaching and the skills of middle leaders.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves
Her Majesty's Inspector