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22 September 2015

Miss Vivien Watson
Headteacher
Cross Lane Primary and Nursery School
Cross Lane
Elland
West Yorkshire
HX5 0LP

Dear Miss Watson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cross Lane Primary and Nursery School, Calderdale

Following my visit to your school on 21 September 2015 with Michael Reeves HMI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection, 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. The school should take further action to:

- ensure the accuracy of assessment information, and strengthen measures and targets in the school development plan to ensure there are clear expectations of the progress pupils should make
- make sure that checks on the quality of teaching and the support offered to teachers are clearly evident in improvements in pupils' work and the quality of feedback they receive
- ensure the provision and leadership in the early years, as well as the focus of learning in Key Stages 1 and 2, meet the needs of children and enable them to make better progress.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher. I also held meetings with all members of the governing body, and with a representative of the local

authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plans were evaluated together with some evidence of pupils' progress and attainment. We looked at a small sample of pupils' books during visits to classrooms.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, the previous headteacher has retired and a new headteacher started in September 2015. One teacher and two teaching assistants left at the end of the summer term and two new teachers, one of whom is the Key Stage 2 leader, started at the school in September.

Main findings

Governors and the local authority have worked effectively in managing the transition and induction of the new headteacher, who has clearly hit the ground running. She has lost no time in getting to know both the pupils and the teachers. She has held a mirror up to the school to ensure everyone knows what is required if the school is to be judged good at its next inspection. The headteacher has put in place programmes of support and coaching to improve teaching. Both the headteacher and the governing body have ensured they have been available to parents before and after school, to improve communication and help parents understand the changes they are making.

The governing body has been reconstituted and governors have received training to sharpen their skills further. As a result, they are well equipped and determined that the school will move forward with a greater sense of urgency. All governors are clear about their roles and how they will check on the improvements set out in the school development plan. They have taken the initiative in commissioning a review of the use of pupil premium funding, using the findings of the review to set challenging objectives for teachers and leaders to address gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

The headteacher has introduced clear and appropriate systems to help leaders check on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. However, the extent to which the checks have brought about improvements in pupils' books is limited because they are at a very early stage. A small scrutiny of pupils' work showed there is much further to go to ensure teachers' feedback to pupils is precise and makes a difference to their progress. Similarly, the extent to which teachers plan sequences of lessons that build and deepen pupils' understanding needs concerted action.

Early indications from pupils' outcomes in the summer term 2015 confirm the finding of the inspection report and show that pupils' achievement, particularly the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, is not at expected levels. School leaders are working with the local authority and external consultants to review assessment information about pupils' achievement to ensure more accurate information is available to leaders and governors to check the progress and attainment of pupils. Leaders and governors are aware that, when this process is completed, this information needs to be included in the action plan and used to set challenging targets for improvement in pupils' outcomes.

The provision in the Nursery Class has been reviewed and this has led to changes in the timing of sessions, as well as changes in staffing and leadership. Nevertheless, as with learning in Key Stages 1 and 2, leaders accept that there is still too much focus on what pupils are doing rather than what they are learning. As a result, pupils are not challenged to think deeply enough by the work they are set.

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

External support

The local authority has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their work with the governing body has supported improvements in the work of governors. Officers have brokered the support of external consultants to enable the school to review the use of the pupil premium and the accuracy of assessments. In particular, officers have worked effectively with the new headteacher and the governing body to ensure an effective and successful transition for the new headteacher.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Calderdale and as below.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority – Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy