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Mr James Pynn
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Pynn

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hovingham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 April 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 November 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.

The school should take further action to:

- make sure that leaders concentrate on pupils' learning when checking the quality of teaching.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held discussions with you, two teachers, the national leader of education supporting the school, representatives of the diocese and the local authority, and five members of the governing body. We both observed teaching in

both classes and looked at some pupils' workbooks. I examined the school improvement plan and other documentation, including monitoring notes, notes of visits from external professionals and governing body documentation.

Context

There have been no significant changes in the school since the last inspection.

Main findings

The initial response to the previous inspection judgement was one of surprise. However, governors have risen to the challenge and, after initial reticence from a minority of staff to engage fully, everybody is on board with improving the school. You are offering strong and decisive leadership.

With support and challenge from the local teaching school alliance, you have undertaken a fundamental review of what constitutes effective teaching. As a result, teachers are beginning to plan more effectively for the wide range of abilities, matching tasks to each pupil's needs, and raising their expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. There are early signs of improvement in progress for many pupils who are engaged and responding positively to the increasing challenge. However, some pupils still have a long way to go to catch up in their writing and mathematics.

The school improvement plan is thorough and detailed. The actions are well considered and set within a realistic timescale. The measures of improvement are precise and are enabling governors to check the impact of the actions taken.

The governing body, with the support of a representative of the local diocese, is looking in more detail at the most important priorities. A 'rapid improvement group' of governors is beginning to ask more challenging questions of school leaders. Governors are beginning to make clearer to leaders the information they require, and how this should be straightforward for non-specialists to understand. You are providing assessment information to governors in an accessible format.

Local authority advisers are coaching and training leaders in their responsibilities, so leaders are growing in confidence and are much clearer about roles and expectations. Middle leaders are becoming much more involved in checking the quality of teaching. Much of this checking concerns compliance with policies and now needs to concentrate on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.

Teachers are checking pupils' progress throughout lessons and asking questions that test out what pupils understand. They are providing helpful feedback in lessons, to which pupils respond straightaway. Teachers are using teaching assistants more effectively during lessons, enabling pupils to make faster progress.

Mathematics teaching is improving. Teachers are giving pupils, especially the most able, more frequent opportunities to attempt tricky problem solving. Teachers are giving younger pupils, and those who need to catch up, plenty of opportunities to use a range of apparatus to help them properly understand mathematical concepts before they move on.

There have been small improvements to the early years 'choosing' provision. However, the quality and layout of resources do not provide enough challenge for the children or present meaningful opportunities for children to practise their reading, writing and number skills.

External support

The local authority and diocese have ensured that external support is well balanced and joined up. A representative of the diocese has helped governors to review and improve their work. Specialist teachers from the Esk Valley Alliance, under the direction of a national leader of education, have been successful in helping teachers to see how they can improve, and teachers have begun to act on the advice. A local authority mathematics adviser, and more recently an English adviser, have worked alongside leaders, coaching them in how to check the quality of teaching, for example by scrutinising the work in pupils' books. The external partners have worked together to check the impact of the support and challenge they are providing. They are very clear with leaders and governors about what still needs to improve.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of York, and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi
Her Majesty's Inspector