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Sue Whelan
Headteacher
Eskdale School
Stainsacre Lane
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Dear Mrs Whelan

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Eskdale School

Following my visit to your school on 23 June 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:

- further embed the monitoring of teaching and strengthen the consequent actions taken by leaders, including governors, so that expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are consistently high
- ensure that all staff follow the school's own marking and presentation policies and consistently follow up their requirements so that pupils make the progress that they should
- further develop the roles of middle and subject leaders so that they are more able to share examples of good teaching more widely across the school.

Evidence

During the inspection I met with you and with members of your senior and middle leadership teams to discuss the progress made in addressing the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. I met with your lead teacher for mathematics and with your special educational needs coordinator. I also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with a representative of the local authority. I visited a range of classrooms and spoke with pupils about their work and attitudes to school. I scrutinised a range of pupils' books and folders. I also assessed the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Main findings

You and your senior team are clear about what needs to be done to improve the school. You have used the increasingly detailed information about pupils' progress to identify where action needs to be taken to eradicate the variability in the quality of teaching. You have moved effectively to improve the weak teaching in the school. You are also aware that there is some way to go but you are determined to improve the school and there are clear signs of sustained improvement.

Governors are increasingly holding leaders to account for the work of the school. They have worked with you to deal robustly with the weakest teaching. They are detailed in their understanding of the shortcomings of the school, especially around the performance of boys and disadvantaged pupils. They are now drawing on a wider range of evidence to make their judgements about how the school is progressing. For example, they now regularly visit the school to undertake 'learning walks'. During these they speak with pupils about their experience of school and meet with members of staff. Governors are now increasingly linked to key subjects and areas of the school. Through these links they are gaining further, detailed, insights. These insights are helping governors to be more effectively focused on the key actions you need to take to ensure the school continues to improve.

You and your leaders are increasingly gathering information about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching from a range of sources, including the recently introduced tracking system. These monitoring actions are now part of the routine work of the school and are helping to reduce the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching identified in the previous inspection report. For example, there is a clear 'review calendar' which sets out when key activities such as leaders' scrutiny of pupils' books will take place. Senior leaders then use the findings of these reviews to provide targeted training and support for staff so that their teaching improves. However, evidence from this inspection shows that there are still significant inconsistencies in, for example, the ways in which staff follow the school's own marking policy. There are examples in the pupils' books where pupils, particularly boys, are asked by the teacher to complete a task. Too often in the books seen the

task was not completed and the teacher did not follow it up as the school's own policy states. Furthermore, the presentation in the boys' books seen is often poor; this is not being picked up and challenged systematically by staff.

The school's plans address the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. They describe how the school will engage with key areas such as the progress of the most able pupils and that of boys. Actions are clearly described and timescales are realistic. However, it is not sufficiently clear which member of staff is undertaking actions nor which, different, staff member or governor is then judging the impact of these actions so that next steps can be identified and the plan improved.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs or disability is effective and well led. The special educational needs coordinator carefully monitors these pupils' progress and supports and advises staff so that these pupils receive effective and well-targeted teaching. The work of teaching assistants is carefully monitored.

Middle and subject leaders are contributing to the growing success of the school in the eradication of inconsistencies in teaching and improvements in the school's work with boys and the most able. For example, middle and subject leaders are increasingly working with staff to use the growing body of information about pupils to improve teaching. They use 'learning walks' to support staff and monitor the impact of their work. They then use after-school sessions to share examples of what went well with staff from across the school. Although it is clear from inspection evidence that this work is beginning to have a positive impact, it is too early to tell how far this positive impact pervades the whole school. Where teachers' expectations are high, in mathematics, English and science, for example, pupils, including boys, relish learning and make good and rapid progress. They report that they enjoy being challenged and 'stretched'. However, in some areas of the school there is still inconsistency in teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should be achieving.

External support

The school is receiving effective support from the local authority in its work to improve English and mathematics and the quality of leadership. It is also receiving effective support from Scalby School, a local good school, in its work to assure the quality of middle leadership and the monitoring of teaching. West Cliff Primary School, another local good school, has effectively supported the school's work in mathematics. Rydale School, an outstanding school, has effectively worked with the school to improve teaching.

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. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector