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Mrs Samantha Gallant
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gallant

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kirkheaton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 September 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 May 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place February 2014, 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the school's acting assistant headteachers and subject leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the local leader of education currently supporting the school, to discuss actions taken since the last inspection. Informal discussions were held with pupils and their parents. The school action plan was reviewed. I considered documents recording the impact of actions taken since the inspection, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the staff recruitment

records and other safeguarding documents. We visited the majority of classrooms together, including the early years provision. We jointly reviewed samples of pupils' books, including their topic books.

Context

Since the inspection in May, the long-standing and respected deputy headteacher retired. This created a timely opportunity for you and the governing body to restructure the leadership team. Three assistant headteacher posts have been created, currently filled by existing staff, subject to an internal recruitment process. Three new teachers have joined the teaching team including one who is newly qualified. A teacher from Westmoor School, Dewsbury, has been seconded to the school for a year as part of the support provided by the local leader of education. The governing body is currently undertaking a staff restructure for support staff.

Main findings

Initially you and the school community found the second requires improvement judgement difficult to accept in light of the improvements in the published outcomes for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6. However, you quickly accepted that in order for the school to be a good school, more pupils in every year group need to make good progress from their starting points and to make good progress over a range of subjects as well as in reading, writing and mathematics. The leadership team restructure has enabled you to create a team that is focused on ensuring consistency in the standard of teaching, learning and assessment in all classes and over the range of subjects taught through 'topics'. The additional capacity means that you and the team have time to support all staff to meet and embed the required standards.

The school action plan is closely linked to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have identified key aspects of teaching to focus teachers' development activities and leaders' monitoring and evaluation each half term. These focus areas have been aligned to the teachers' appraisal process. You also plan to revisit each of the key themes over the year so that you can be assured that the strategies developed lead to more pupils making more progress in all subjects.

Senior and middle leaders are clear about their roles in supporting and challenging teachers to consistently reach the standards you expect. Although the action plan has just been agreed by the governing body, your initial work is showing some early signs of impact. More pupils are showing greater pride in their work in topic books and some work in topic books is at a similar standard to the pupils' literacy work.

You have reconfirmed your high expectations for what teachers should plan to do in lessons. In turn, teachers are clear about the high expectations they should have of pupils in every subject.

Ensuring the consistent use of the school's marking and feedback policy is the focus for this half term. You and senior leaders have taken a robust approach to considering research evidence about the most effective ways teachers feed back to pupils. As a result, you ask teachers to give direct feedback, 'fix its', in lessons and encourage pupils to support each other in understanding how to improve their work. You are ensuring that the systems you are developing do not overload the teachers with additional work that is not proven to be effective.

Developing teachers' skills in questioning, so that pupils can develop their thinking skills and deepen their understanding, is at the early stages of planning. Again you have taken a robust approach by asking teachers about their strengths in this area so that you can plan training that is targeted to their needs. This will include joint training with King James Academy.

The governing body fully understands the impact of the second requires improvement judgement and the need to increase the pace of development. It recognises the need to ensure consistently good progress across the range of subjects and in all year groups. Governors have aligned their school visits to the action plan. They plan to have a more active and challenging role in holding you and other leaders to account for progress in delivering the action plan.

Pupils and parents spoken to during the day are positive about the school and the renewed approaches to securing better outcomes for pupils. Pupils recognise that teachers work hard to make lessons fun even when the subject is hard. Pupils remain confident that staff sort out any problems with name-calling or falling out.

An omission on the single central record was addressed during the day of the inspection and governors have responded with a commitment to check the record in more detail in the future.

External support

The local authority has responded to the second requires improvement judgement by increasing the level of support offered to the school through the school advisory service. This will include support to further develop the early years provision. The local authority has agreed a budget deficit reduction plan with the governing body over the next two years. The small deficit has arisen due to a fall in pupil numbers.

The local authority supported the Pennine Teaching School Alliance in securing funding from the Department for Education to purchase support from a local leader of education, the headteacher at Westmoor School. She has previously worked with the school following the inspection in 2014, focusing on developing key stage 2 outcomes. The current plan includes her wider involvement in leadership and management issues and key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Hayter
Her Majesty's Inspector