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Miss Paula Skelly
Moor Row Community Primary School
Moor Row
Cumbria
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Dear Miss Skelly

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Moor Row Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 April 2017, 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 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in June 2016, 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 in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the more robust challenge to senior leaders that governors are beginning to demonstrate is recorded clearly
- make sure that the large majority of pupils are acquiring appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills in subjects other than English and mathematics, especially science
- provide more opportunities for pupils to use their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics, especially in number and calculations
- bring the school's website up to date and ensure that it remains so
- ensure that teachers follow the school's marking and feedback policy consistently.

Evidence

During my visit I held a number of meetings with you. I met with a group of six parents. I also met with a group of eight Year 6 pupils. I had a telephone discussion with the local authority's school improvement adviser to discuss the action taken since the last inspection and the level of support provided. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair. I examined a variety of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, its self-evaluation summary, additional assessment documentation, minutes of meetings, documents connected with safeguarding and records of your checks on the quality of teaching and learning. We also carried out a series of joint visits to classrooms to look at pupils' progress in a variety of subjects. I also analysed pupils' work from early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Context

There have been no changes to the context of the school since the previous inspection, other than a rise in the number of pupils from 82 to 84.

Main findings

You have improved the leadership and management of the school in number of ways since the previous inspection, although you accept that there are still areas that need further work.

You have drawn up an action plan that addresses the areas for improvement that were included in the previous inspection report, including suitable actions and time frames. However, you recognise that you still need to include sharper evaluation of the impact of the actions on pupils' achievement.

Your improved checks on the quality of the work of staff and pupils across the school are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. You have developed a comprehensive programme of monitoring, which includes observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. You identify the strengths and areas for development and feed these back to staff so that they can improve their performance.

Your staff now produce more detailed plans to support teaching and learning that focus on developing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in each subject. However, evidence seen in some workbooks, such as Year 6 science, indicates that teachers do not yet apply these plans consistently, as pupils' acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills is sometimes slow. Leaders of subjects other than mathematics and English have not fully developed their evaluation skills in order to assess the quality of provision in each of their subjects. As a result, their impact on improving progress in their subject is limited.

Governors are having an increasing impact on improving the school. They now have a better understanding of the key strengths and weaknesses of the school and the progress of pupils in all year groups and key stages. They have started to check the effectiveness of the way the school uses pupil premium funding and they know how senior leaders spend the money to support this group of pupils.

Governors are also developing a better grasp of how you manage the performance of teachers and they say that they corroborate your evaluation of teachers' effectiveness by, for example, asking searching questions about the progress of pupils. However, records of governors' work do not reflect this level of challenge to senior leaders.

In English and mathematics, there is clear evidence of strengthening progress by pupils, which is a result of more effective teaching. Recently published assessment information and the school's own assessment data show that the achievement of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is improving. In writing in Year 6, for example, evidence from pupils' work shows increasing ability to use an engaging style and advanced vocabulary choices, such as 'There are still ruins of the tragedy that occurred that fateful day.' However, in mathematics, there is limited evidence that teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in reasoning and solving problems, especially in their work in number and calculation.

Teaching assistants are beginning to support pupils well. They now encourage pupils to improve their work and are starting to question them in a way that allows them to think for themselves. This is helping to improve pupils' progress.

There is some evidence that teachers are beginning to challenge the most able pupils. In writing in Year 1, for example, the teacher expects them to plan their work independently and to write with a greater degree of sophistication in language and sentence structure. However, in other subjects, such as religious education, most-able pupils are limited by the structure of some tasks, which prevents them from making their own decisions about content and presentation.

Teachers do not consistently apply the school's marking and feedback policy across the majority of subjects, although there is evidence that they do so in mathematics.

You have taken additional steps to improve attendance, including supporting disadvantaged pupils by holding regular meetings with parents to remind them of the importance of good attendance. As a result, attendance is starting to improve for this group of pupils.

You and your early years leader have an improving understanding of children's learning needs in the early years. As a result, children are starting to make stronger progress, especially in writing. The early years leader has developed improved planning and is making use of the school's revised tracking system. These actions are starting to enable staff to cater for children's needs more effectively. Because of improving teaching, you assess that three out of the four children currently in Reception are on

track to reach a good level of development by the end of the year.

Parents who spoke to me were very positive about the school. They appreciate the extra-curricular activities that you provide and say that their children receive appropriate homework. They feel that their children are safe and happy and they are confident that you and your staff would respond well to parents' concerns, if they had any. A large majority of parents who accessed Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were also positive about the work of the school.

Your safeguarding records are thorough and fit for purpose and you respond promptly to any concerns. Your record of checks on the suitability of staff is compliant.

You acknowledge that your school's website does not currently meet requirements, as there is some information missing. You and your governors are aware of this situation and have undertaken to rectify it.

I spoke with a group of pupils from Year 6, who told me that they feel safe in school because 'the teachers put us first'. They enjoy the extra-curricular activities you provide and they feel that their teachers give them challenging work. They recognise that there are some isolated incidents of misbehaviour but they say that teachers deal with them well. They know about different types of bullying, but say that it rarely happens in school.

External support

The local authority provides effective support in securing the necessary improvements and regularly monitors the school's progress through strategic improvement meetings. 'Peer-to-peer' support from other schools in the local area is also having a positive effect on, for example, the quality of teaching, as staff benefit from observing good practice in the partner schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector