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Mrs Louise Dale  
Sandal Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Dale

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sandal Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 May 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.

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:

- improve the consistency in handwriting throughout the school by insisting all staff have equally high expectations
- ensure that subject leaders have a greater impact on standards in their subjects
- sharpen the success criteria in the school's improvement plans so that it is very clear how the actions will improve outcomes for pupils.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the senior leadership team, subject leaders, three governors and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and spent time reviewing school documentation relating to: performance management; pupil assessment information; monitoring of teaching and learning; and governance. I observed teaching and learning in all of the year groups, along with you and the deputy headteachers, and we spoke to pupils and scrutinised their work. I also reviewed the checks that are made on the suitability of adults to work with children.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection there have been substantial staffing changes. The leadership team has been strengthened to include an additional deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher and an extra phase leader. Six teachers are new to the school since the last inspection, including three newly qualified teachers. Four teachers have returned from maternity leave since the last inspection. One teacher is currently on maternity leave and a temporary teacher is covering this post. Since September 2016, staffing has become much more stable.

## **Main findings**

The main barrier to the school's improvement has been the turbulence experienced with staffing. Since September, however, you have secured a more stable staff team. New members of the leadership team and teaching team needed to develop into their roles and learn about school systems and routines. This resulted in much slower progress being made at the beginning of the school year. However, in the spring term, leaders have begun to see the impact of their actions take shape more quickly. You have accurately identified where teachers need additional support. This is now resulting in the quality of teaching improving more rapidly. Through training, moderation and the school's developing assessment system, teachers have developed a greater awareness of the expectations in their year group. In particular, they now understand how to effectively challenge pupils so that a greater proportion can exceed expectations. The school's assessment information and work in pupils' books show that there are now greater proportions of pupils who are on track to meet and exceed the expectations. This can be seen especially in the Year 2 and Year 6 cohorts. However, some inconsistency between classes and year groups remains. Crucially, leaders and governors are aware where this is the case and you have plans in place to redress the balance.

Following a stalling in progress over the autumn term, you introduced new, fortnightly leadership meetings. This is helping you to check progress towards tackling the areas for improvement and is effective in identifying the most critical next steps for the following two weeks. This is allowing leaders to provide much

more responsive support. For example, leaders highlighted that pupils' spelling is not developing rapidly enough. You implemented a new approach to address this and regular checks will now focus on this area of pupils' learning to make sure that the strategies used are having a positive impact. This refined approach to school improvement taken by leaders is providing better clarity about the intended impact and tighter timescales from which to measure progress.

Using the school's assessment information and checks on the quality of teaching and learning, leaders are now more rigorously identifying what is working well and where there is more work to do. Leaders have noticed that handwriting is a barrier for many pupils. However, plans for improvement do not sufficiently focus on quickly developing pupils' pen grip and handwriting fluency. At present, poor handwriting hinders the progress of some pupils. This is particularly noticeable where teachers do not have high enough expectations of the presentation and quality of pupils' work. Consequently, pupils in these classes produce less written work and of poorer quality, which means they are not making the rapid progress needed.

A new approach to the wider curriculum has helped the new subject leaders develop practice in their areas of responsibility. Subject leaders made checks in pupils' books at the beginning of the year. This identified that there were still missed opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum and for the development of subject-specific skills. The curriculum explorer books, which record pupils' work across the wider curriculum, are now clearly evidencing the impact of subject leaders' actions. Pupils' books now show more regular opportunities for developing subject-based skills such as using maps and fieldwork in geography. Subject leaders have effectively supported teachers with their planning. Teachers now identify opportunities for extended writing at the planning stage and this aspect of pupils' work is, therefore, being more fully exploited. The cross-curricular writing has also given greater purpose and context for pupils to use and apply their writing skills. Pupils are developing much greater stamina in their writing as a result. Pupils' books now show that writing in English and other subjects is of the same standard. The next step is to ensure that subject leaders of foundation subjects have an increased influence on outcomes in their subject, through defining the standards of current pupils and identifying where improvements can be made.

Governors have a secure understanding of the school's progress towards achieving the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They are robust in their challenge to leaders and use the standards committee as a vehicle for maintaining a strong focus on checking the impact of actions taken. They have taken decisive action to strengthen the school's leadership team and also develop middle leaders in order to create a more sustainable model for school improvement. They are committed to building on the school's existing strengths and continuing to provide a well-rounded education which offers a range of experiences and opportunities. They use the school improvement plan and school's assessment information alongside each other to help them to assess progress, ask challenging questions and support

continual improvement.

The school improvement plan is detailed and is used as a working document. This means that you are able to make adaptations as needed, in light of monitoring activities. An additional document to track the progress towards meeting the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection has also been introduced. This is allowing leaders to measure more precisely the progress made and then to identify the next steps. It has ensured that leaders have become more responsive and are able to tailor their monitoring activities to address any emerging issues. However, it would be beneficial to include precise success criteria related to pupils' outcomes in the school improvement plan to add even greater rigour to the system.

### **External support**

The local authority is providing very strong support and challenge for school leaders. The advice received has enabled school leaders to move at a more rapid pace. Examples of a wide range of schools have been provided so that leaders have been able to learn from good practice elsewhere. Leaders have been keen to respond to advice offered by the local authority representative. As a result of this effective guidance, leaders have developed more robust checks on the impact of their actions. Consequently, the impact of leaders' actions has become more evident over time and is now gathering more rapid momentum.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey

**Her Majesty's Inspector**