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Ms Kirsty Laing
Carcroft Primary School
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Dear Ms Laing

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Carcroft Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 July 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 have been 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the tracking of progress for disadvantaged pupils
- improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
- develop the teaching of reading in order for pupils to make faster progress in key stage 2, so that an increasing proportion reach the expected standard by the end of Year 6

- build on the initial success of improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that pupils continue to make more rapid progress, especially in key stage 2.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, the governing body and a representative of 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 with you in all of the year groups 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. You have been appointed as headteacher and have been in the substantive post since October 2016. The acting deputy headteacher and acting assistant headteacher are due to take up their substantive posts in September 2017. A wider team of leaders have taken responsibilities for teaching and learning and subject leadership roles. Three teachers are new to the school since the last inspection, including two newly qualified teachers.

Main findings

You are a highly dedicated headteacher and are uncompromising in your desire for the school to continually improve. You have created a positive learning culture through your intent to share responsibilities, increase accountability and give staff leadership opportunities. As a result, a new culture has been established, staff have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour, morale is high and together you take collective responsibility for pupils' outcomes. This has led to encouraging signs of improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning have been transformed. An increasing proportion of pupils met the expected standards at the end of key stage 2 this year in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you are not complacent and recognise that continuing to establish the changes you have implemented will be critical to improving outcomes even further, particularly at key stage 2 and for disadvantaged pupils.

You know the school, staff and pupils well. You are acutely aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Realistic and thorough evaluation has helped senior leaders to tenaciously tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Effective monitoring and evaluation systems have helped you to eradicate the weakest teaching. Teaching is continuing

to improve and is consistently good in the early years and key stage 1. While these pupils make good progress, attainment is just below that seen nationally. A brand new team of teachers in Years 5 and 6 this year have contributed to the improving outcomes in key stage 2. However, pupils in the current Years 4 and 5 still need to make more rapid progress to achieve well by the end of Year 6. Improvements to the teaching of mathematics, with an increasing focus on developing pupils' reasoning and problem solving, is resulting in good progress for current pupils. You are aware that progress and attainment in reading is not as strong and have highlighted this as a priority for development next year.

The attainment of disadvantaged pupils throughout school varies. The review of pupil premium spending supported you in identifying pupils' barriers to learning and the appropriate support needed to help pupils achieve. You realise that more rigorous tracking of progress from pupils' starting points will reveal how quickly the difference is diminishing between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and the attainment of other pupils nationally.

By strengthening the leadership team, you have created greater capacity for further improvement. Strong, new appointments and utilising the skills and expertise of existing staff have enabled you to share responsibilities across the staff team. Leaders are motivated by your inspiring leadership and by seeing the impact of their actions on improving outcomes for pupils. Middle leaders are being developed well by the curriculum leader and through the support they receive from colleague mentors. This is helping them to grow in confidence, be reflective about their leadership development and contribute more robustly to school improvement. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly focused on the impact of their actions. They are now in the position to be able to raise standards more effectively in their areas of responsibility. This will be particularly important as you develop assessment of subjects other than English and mathematics over the coming year. Leadership of religious education (RE) was an area for improvement in the previous inspection, and by working with local schools and networks, a new curriculum for RE has been implemented and is beginning to improve pupils' awareness of other religions and cultural traditions.

Governors are ambitious for the school and have made effective leadership appointments. Challenge and support from the governing body have enabled leaders to tackle underperforming teaching and ensure that the school continues to improve.

The leadership of behaviour has been successful. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They are appropriately challenged and are interested in their learning as a result of high expectations of learning and behaviour from leaders and teachers. Training and support from a local leader of education (LLE) has been instrumental in contributing to this rapid improvement. Pupils have noticed the improvements in behaviour. They speak with high praise of their teachers and say that they feel valued as individuals and are treated with care and respect. Conduct around the

school between lessons and during lunchtime has also been transformed. Structured play at breaktimes keeps pupils active and is encouraging healthy lifestyles. It also allows pupils to benefit from building strong relationships with adults and other pupils. The number of behaviour incidents and exclusions has reduced dramatically as a result of the improvements made in the last year.

Attendance and persistent absence is still variable. There have been some improvements to attendance overall and for disadvantaged pupils. However, attendance and persistent absence remain below the national average. Leaders have been effective in adding greater rigour to attendance processes and raising parents' and carers' awareness about the importance of good attendance. You recognised the need to strengthen the team of staff who support pupils' pastoral care. From September, additional capacity has been created in order for leaders to focus on bringing attendance and persistent absence more in line with the national picture.

External support

The local authority has provided considerable support and challenge for the school since the last inspection. The LLE support has helped leaders and teachers to sharpen their focus on developing teaching and learning and improving behaviour. In addition, termly review meetings have been beneficial in ensuring that leaders' actions are under regular and robust review. As a result of the positive signs of improvement seen in pupils' outcomes, coupled with improving practice in teaching and behaviour, the local authority plans to scale back its support. Leaders are now well equipped to sustain the improvements made so far and to drive further improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey

Her Majesty's Inspector