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Mrs Elizabeth Wheildon
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Dear Mrs Wheildon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Trinity CofE Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 13 October 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 December 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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- refine improvement plans to include precise criteria for evaluating the impact of actions on the progress and achievements of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils
- ensure that actions being taken enable more pupils to achieve highly or at greater depth in the early years and in each year group, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, four governors, including the chair of the governing body, middle leaders and a school improvement adviser from North

Yorkshire local authority. The focus of the meetings was to determine the impact of actions taken since the previous inspection. We visited a range of lessons together, observing learning, talking to pupils about their work and reviewing their workbooks. A range of documents was scrutinised, including the school's action planning, pupils' progress information and minutes of recent governing body meetings.

Context

There have been a few changes to the school's organisation since the previous inspection. A new chair of the governing body was appointed in September 2017. The middle leadership team has been reorganised to broaden its remit. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) left the school in summer 2017. The school now shares the SENCo from the junior school. Partnership working with the junior school has increased and a number of staff teach across both schools. Consultation has recently begun with parents, the wider community, the diocese and the local authority, to develop a formal federation with the junior school.

Main findings

You and the governing body responded swiftly to the outcomes of the previous inspection. Urgent action was taken to improve the effectiveness of the school's electronic systems. Your systems to track pupils' behaviour and attendance or to identify any potential safeguarding concerns are now effective. This is ensuring that any area of concern can be identified and addressed in a timely way. Changes to the use of the physical education and sports funding ensure that it is being used more effectively to improve pupils' participation rates and their enjoyment of, and engagement in, a wider range of activities and sports competitions. Evaluation of the impact of these changes is currently taking place.

Your determined focus on improving the quality of teaching has resulted in many more pupils working in line with their age-related expectations across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. The embryonic assessment systems to track pupils' progress at the time of the previous inspection are being more successfully embedded across the school. Teachers are becoming more skilled in using this information about pupils' current skills and abilities to plan work that helps them to move on effectively from their starting points. However, you are aware that there is still work to do to ensure that more pupils achieve at a greater depth in writing and mathematics, particularly disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of these pupils gaining expected standards by the end of Year 2 has improved significantly this year. Nevertheless, the proportion achieving at greater depth is still not good enough. Activities in some lessons do not challenge pupils sufficiently to move them on quickly from what they already know and understand. In mathematics, pupils sometimes spend too long on a concept they have already mastered. On occasions, the work set for lower-ability pupils is too hard. You have identified these weaknesses in your improvement plans and are taking action to improve matters.

The improving assessment systems mean that pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning are now spotted quickly. Regular discussions between you and teaching staff ensure that additional actions and support can be put in place to help pupils catch up with their peers. You are currently working with the SENCo to evaluate the impact of additional actions on the progress of pupils receiving such support.

Improvements made to the quality of provision in the early years have had a positive impact on the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception. The proportion is above that found nationally. Given that children's skills and abilities are broadly typical of those expected for children of this age on entry into Nursery, you know that this represents steady rather than good progress. You are continuing to work with staff and the local authority early years specialist to ensure that more children make rapid progress during their time in the early years.

Your relentless focus on developing strategies to improve pupils' reading, phonics and comprehension skills have paid dividends. There has been a 14% improvement in the proportion reaching the expected standard in reading by the end of key stage 1 since 2016. The proportion is now close to that found nationally. The proportion reading at a greater depth is above average. You are working closely with staff this year to ensure that achievements in writing at greater depth are as strong.

You and the governing body have an accurate understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve, because of the very wide-ranging monitoring activities you undertake. You have developed detailed plans to improve all aspects of the school's work and these are checked regularly by yourself and governors. Reviews of actions, however, focus too much on whether actions have been completed rather than the impact of those actions on pupils' achievements. This is partly because there are insufficient measurable targets against which to evaluate the impact of the school's work on the progress different year groups and different groups of pupils make.

Governors are working closely with you to ensure that Holy Trinity becomes a good school at the next inspection. They are increasingly able to hold you to account because they receive much more accurate information about pupils' learning and progress in lessons, their behaviour, attendance and safety in school. Governors continue to hone their skills by accessing training and development activities, including training on analysing pupils' progress data in school compared to national averages. They have ensured that the pupil premium review was completed in a timely way. The resulting action plan identifies clearly the actions being taken to improve the achievements of disadvantaged pupils. Together with governors, you are currently reviewing the impact of this funding for the last academic year so that an accurate, evaluative report can be placed on the school website.

External support

You and governors have valued the timely support from local authority specialist advisers for English and the early years. They have provided helpful challenge as well as support. The impact of their contributions can be seen in the improving quality of provision in the early years and pupils' improving phonics and reading skills. You are currently securing support from the local authority's mathematics specialist adviser to help improve further this aspect of the school's work.

Reports from the local authority's school improvement adviser and the report resulting from the local authority's recent review of the school's effectiveness are insightful. They explain clearly the emerging strengths and areas that need continued focus. You are incorporating their recommendations into your action plans for improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, 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

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector