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Mrs Susan Bell
Castleford Townville Infants' School
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Dear Mrs Bell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Castleford Townville Infants' School

Following my visit to your school on 18 December 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 January 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- give close attention to addressing the areas for improvement highlighted at the last inspection in January 2016
- make sure that leaders more thoroughly evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics, so that they can appropriately support teachers in raising pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics
- raise teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work, in their presentation and in what they can achieve
- improve the teaching of phonics to support pupils in successfully developing their reading and writing skills
- ensure that governors use the information provided by leaders effectively to

inform and improve their questioning and challenge about the progress pupils are making

- continue to focus on developing pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics, making sure that work is well matched to pupils' needs, particularly the most able.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the school business manager, middle leaders, representatives from the governing body (including the chair), and representatives from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's action plans were reviewed alongside leaders' summary evaluation of the performance of the school. You and I visited classrooms together and looked at pupils' books to check on their learning and progress. I met with a group of pupils. I spent time reviewing documents, including records of the work of the governors and records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.

Context

There have been a considerable number of changes in leadership and staffing since the last inspection. You have been in post, as the interim headteacher, since September 2017. Several teachers and members of support staff have left or are due to leave at the end of this term. Some new staff have been appointed. Other roles will not be re-appointed as leaders say that the school was previously over-staffed. The governing body has plans to recruit a substantive headteacher and a deputy headteacher in the new year.

Main findings

Progress to address the actions identified for improvement at the last inspection has not been swift enough. The school has experienced challenges within staffing and leadership. It is only recently that firm foundations have been laid to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

You have brought a calming and positive focus to the school since your interim appointment in September 2017. You have clear priorities for improvement and have created a supportive culture where staff trust you and the decisions you are making in directing improvement. You have risen to the challenge of addressing the considerable improvements needed to specific school systems and policies. For example, you have developed effective ways of managing the performance of teachers and support staff, invested in new computing equipment and made sure that staff are trained in how to use it.

However, over the last year, not enough emphasis has been placed on improving the areas identified as requiring improvement at the previous inspection. In their

plans to find sustainable leadership for the school, and to complete the required reviews, such as the review of governance, governors have lost sight of the aspects of pupils' performance that most need improvement. They have not gained a clear enough view of how well the areas for improvement have been addressed and how well different groups of pupils are performing in different subjects. For example, they are unsure how to demonstrate their belief that attendance has improved, and they are not accurate in their view that disadvantaged pupils in school make good progress. They have not used the information recently provided by leaders, or the areas identified at the last inspection, well enough to hold leaders to account for the school's improvement.

Disadvantaged pupils are not making enough progress in English and mathematics to catch up with their peers. In Year 1, some pupils are falling further behind. Over Year 1 and Year 2, about half of pupils are working within age-related expectations in reading and mathematics, with their progress in writing being the weakest area. However, the review of the pupil premium funding has helped leaders to identify what needs to be done to improve outcomes for these pupils. A good start has been made by the lead teacher for disadvantaged pupils in gathering information about each pupil, including their attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics, their attendance, any additional support they have already received and any barriers they may have to their learning. Leaders are clear that they now need to use this information to inform the support they put in place for these pupils and to ensure that the progress pupils make is more rapid.

The teaching of phonics was identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection, with lower ability pupils particularly highlighted for support. However, you agree that although teachers now provide leaders with regular test scores and the lead teacher reports that staff are confident in teaching phonics, pupils' work and lesson drop-ins show that the teaching of phonics is not successfully supporting pupils to develop their English skills. While adults model the sounds that letters represent correctly, they do not ensure that pupils confidently and systematically apply this knowledge, especially in their writing. In particular, teachers do not effectively demonstrate to pupils how to transfer the sounds they hear into accurate spellings when they write. You want to implement a new system for teaching phonics and you know that all staff who teach phonics sessions will need to be fully trained in the delivery of this programme.

The quality of teaching overall needs further improvement. Pupils' handwriting and presentation are poor, particularly in Year 1. Many pupils do not form letters accurately. Adults' expectations of the quality of work from pupils of all abilities are not consistently high. Teachers do not give pupils consistently clear direction about how to improve their work, although this support is stronger for older pupils. Positively, teachers want to improve their skills so that they can better support the pupils in moving on more quickly in their learning. They are receptive to your advice and guidance in how to improve.

Leaders have taken some effective steps in improving teaching and learning in mathematics. They have valued the school-to-school support they have received to help improve this aspect of their work. Leaders have implemented a structure to support teachers in delivering the new curriculum. As a result, teachers have a better understanding of what pupils need to learn in order to meet age-related expectations. Teachers give pupils opportunities to solve problems by applying their mathematical skills, but the lead teacher for mathematics is right in her view that this now needs to be further developed to extend all pupils' reasoning skills. She knows that the national curriculum needs to be the starting point for teachers' planning, rather than the scheme itself. She has a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in mathematics through her checks on pupils' work in books and school assessment information. However, she has not yet had the opportunity to deepen this understanding with checks on the quality of teaching in lessons. She agrees that work in mathematics is not consistently matched to the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able.

Improving pupils' awareness and understanding of life in modern Britain was another area identified for improvement in the last inspection. You acknowledge that this work has not been your priority since you joined the school, although you have directed some teaching in this area through your assemblies. Conversations with pupils during my visit confirm that there is more work to be done in this area.

Pupils' attendance shows some improvement overall since the last inspection, but is still just below the national average. The administrative officer has a very good understanding of exactly which pupils have lower attendance and those who are persistently absent from school. Strategies are in place to raise the profile of good attendance, such as certificates and regular information to parents. The opportunity to come to the school breakfast club has improved the punctuality of many pupils and helped to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent. You plan to continue to raise parents' expectations and engagement in this area.

External support

The local authority has accurately identified that strong support has been needed to strengthen leadership and improve the quality of teaching and learning within the school. It has brokered support from another school within the local authority that has successfully addressed similar challenges, for example, in teaching and learning in mathematics. This support has been helpful, not only in making improvements in mathematics teaching, but also in helping the school realise the need for a change in culture and in raising expectations.

The local authority itself has experienced some changes in staffing, which have meant changes in the school's improvement partner. However, during the latest change, the authority has implemented a very smooth transition and handover, so that no time is lost in the direction and support it knows it needs to continue to give to the school. Now that the confidence of governors and staff has improved, the

local authority acknowledges that it needs to focus more firmly on checking the on impact of the actions that are being taken on pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley

Her Majesty's Inspector