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Kirsty Laing  
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Dear Kirsty

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

Following my visit to your school on 15 January 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

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:

- make sure that the recently introduced phonics programme is being effectively implemented and that pupils who are not keeping up with the pace of the programme's expectations are supported to catch up quickly
- ensure that the timetable is reviewed so that subjects beyond English and mathematics are given enough time allocation
- develop the curriculum in the foundation subjects so that each subject is coherently planned over pupils' primary education and each unit of work is sequenced effectively

- check that foundation subject curriculum plans are being implemented successfully and that staff are well trained in the subjects they teach.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with: the headteacher and senior leaders; the English leader and phonics leader; the early years leader; a group of four governors, including the chair and vice-chair; a representative of the local authority; a group of pupils; and a selection of staff. Meetings centred around the actions taken since the previous inspection. Visits to lessons were undertaken jointly with school leaders. Discussions took place with some parents at the end of the school day. The school's improvement plans were also evaluated.

## **Context**

There have been significant leadership and staffing changes since the previous inspection. Recruitment has also been a challenge. Changes have been made to middle leadership roles. Temporary cover has been in place for the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher roles due to maternity leave. More than a third of the teachers are new to post since the last inspection. The office and inclusion teams have been restructured and the school has had a long period of time without a business manager. There are five new governors since the previous inspection, including the chair, who took up post in November 2019.

## **Main findings**

The school has faced considerable challenges as a result of instability in leadership and staffing arrangements since the last inspection. These difficulties have limited the school's leadership capacity. As a result, leaders' progress in addressing the areas for improvement has been hindered. Where poor teaching has been challenged, this has sometimes led to staff leaving the school. This necessary measure has contributed further to the staffing turbulence experienced.

Leaders have recognised that, historically, expectations for pupils were not high enough. Sometimes, pupils' difficulties were seen as an excuse for their low achievement rather than barriers to learning which need to be addressed. An inclusion team has been established to support this aspect of the school's work. The headteacher is committed to creating an inclusive and calm environment for pupils. She has worked with stakeholders to produce new mission and vision statements for the school.

The school's improvement plans are focused on appropriate priorities. Leaders review the plans on a termly basis. However, leaders sometimes have an overly

positive view of the impact of their actions. Governors are not yet providing the consistent challenge about school improvement actions which leaders need.

In 2019, pupils' outcomes in all subjects, and at every key stage, remained low. In some cases, they declined further. Pupils' reading attainment, in particular, is of concern. Attainment and progress in reading by the end of key stage 2 have been significantly below average and in the lowest 20% nationally for the last three years. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check and in reading at the end of key stage 1 was also in the lowest 20% nationally in 2019.

Leaders have taken some action to improve the teaching of phonics but have been too slow to implement this. A new programme was put in place by October 2019. Many pupils are not keeping up with its pace. Pupils who are struggling with the expectations of the curriculum have only just started receiving additional support. This lack of extra practice has meant that pupils are not catching up. Many pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are not reading with the fluency needed to help them access their learning to the full across the curriculum. This is because they have not developed their knowledge of phonics rapidly enough.

The new approach to teaching phonics is in its very early stages. Staff have received training but have not developed enough expertise in the teaching of early reading. Staff use assessment to find out what pupils are finding difficult but do not always know how to help them overcome their difficulties. They do not make effective activity choices to fully involve pupils and give them enough practice in the aspects of phonics they are struggling with. Staff do not use terminology and approaches consistently from class to class.

Leaders have made sure that pupils read books which match the phonics knowledge they have been taught. However, they struggle to read them with fluency. This is because they have not always remembered important knowledge they have previously been taught. Additionally, many pupils do not practise reading these books at home or in school in order to become more confident and accurate with each read.

Once pupils have mastered phonics they are able to choose appropriately challenging books which are of interest to them. They say that they enjoy the books which teachers read to them at story time as well as the ones they read in their English lessons.

Leaders introduced a new curriculum, for the subjects beyond English and mathematics, in the autumn term of 2019. However, it does not cover the scope of the national curriculum. Some subjects are not being taught. In others, timetables do not match leaders' expectations in terms of the time allocated to each subject. Leaders have not planned each subject coherently so that pupils make links and build on their previous learning over time. New plans are still in need of substantial

work so that each unit is sequenced effectively and that teachers are clear about what to teach and how it builds on pupils' prior learning. Leaders are aware that there is more to do to make sure that teachers have the expertise they need to implement the curriculum effectively.

Many of the governors are new, including the chair, who took up post in November 2019. The governing body has begun to put systems in place to help them provide more effective support and challenge for leaders. However, it is too early to see the impact of these recent changes. Governors do not have a clear overview of the way pupil premium funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils. Several policies and documents required to be on the school's website were either unavailable or not up-to-date at the time of this monitoring inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority has identified the school as one which is causing concern. This has led to substantial support in a variety of forms. Leaders and governors have benefited from regular school improvement meetings, local authority attendance at governing body meetings and through training and specialist support regarding early years, inclusion and early reading. Leaders engage with this support well. However, reduced leadership capacity due to staffing upheaval has limited the impact of the support provided.

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**