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6 March 2015

Mrs Suzanne Hay
Headteacher
Cliffe Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Main Street
Cliffe
Selby
North Yorkshire
YO8 6NN

Dear Mrs Hay

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cliffe Voluntary Controlled Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 9 March 2015, 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 November 2014. 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. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupils' progress is evidenced by accurate data and supported by examples of work
- ensure that subject improvement plans for English and mathematics make specific reference to the impact actions are to have on pupils' learning and progress
- improve the monitoring of classroom practice by leaders at all levels by focussing on learning and the contribution that teaching makes to it

- reduce the size of the governor representation on the school rapid improvement group in order to evaluate and monitor the work of the school more effectively.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, a representative of the governing body and the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan, English and mathematics subject leaders' action plans and the school system for checking pupils' progress were evaluated. Brief visits to all classes were undertaken and the arrangements for performance management were reviewed.

Context

Due to unavoidable circumstances there was considerable turbulence in staffing prior to the inspection in November 2014. This included the leadership and management of the school. A permanent team of staff is now in place and this includes the headteacher, who has returned on a full-time basis.

Main findings

The return to work of the headteacher following a period of absence together with a much more informed and effective governing body is beginning to bring about rapid improvement in relation to teaching, learning and leadership at all levels. There are still aspects of the work of the school that need to be addressed but senior leaders and the governing body are acutely aware of what they are and plans are in place to address them.

The overall school improvement plan focuses on all the key areas that required attention following the recent inspection. Improvements are already apparent. Under the guidance and direction of the headteacher the quality of teaching is stronger and this is evident in the improved progress that pupils are now making. Increased opportunities for pupils to apply their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects are evident and this is beginning to raise pupils' achievement. A whole school policy for the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar is also in place.

A system to check the progress made by all pupils as they move through the school has been established. Given that raising pupils' achievement is a key area for improvement it would be worthwhile ensuring that the data which indicates 'good' progress is accompanied by evidence of pupils work. This will confirm the accuracy of the data and also support future external scrutiny.

The headteacher acknowledges that developing the effectiveness of middle leaders is work in progress. This is understandable as they have only recently taken on their subject responsibilities. However, they have an important part to play in the drive to raise achievement. In order to help them fulfil their role successfully, subject

improvement plans for English and mathematics need to make specific reference to the impact initiatives are designed to have on pupils' learning and progress. In other words what precisely are the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils need to acquire in order to raise achievement.

The headteacher monitors and supports the quality of teaching regularly to ensure that school policies are adhered to. More leaders are starting to become involved in monitoring the work of the school. To do so effectively, it is essential that observations of lessons focus on learning and the contribution that teaching makes to it as opposed to simply identifying a list of teaching characteristics. This will help teachers and leaders to focus more sharply on enhancing the progress of all groups.

Following the recent inspection a review of governance was recommended. This was completed in March 2015 and included reference to the following positive features; strong leadership by the Chair of Governors, a developing awareness of their strategic role and a greater focus on school improvement activities. As a consequence, the governing body are now making a valuable contribution to the school improvement process.

One of the recommendations arising from the review is that *'governor monitoring is tightly aligned to the school improvement plan so that governors may demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the activities undertaken and the impact on outcomes for pupils'*. This is essential and the governing body has established a 'rapid improvement group' which is well placed to implement this recommendation. At present the group is open to all governors. In order to effectively monitor and evaluate the work of the school in securing improvements the governor representation on this group should be reduced and membership formalised as a way to improve manageability and increase productivity. It is incumbent on the governors on this group to report back to other members so that they are kept fully informed.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support to the school. The Chair of Governors commented that review of governance was constructive. Positive features were noted but it also identified where improvements were required. The headteacher also acknowledged the contribution made by the local authority mathematics adviser and the 'teacher networks' that have provided support for subject leaders in English, mathematics, science and computing. The Selby Learning Alliance has provided valuable support in relation to developing a school approach to assessment. All of the above have helped to move the school forward.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler

Her Majesty's Inspector