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29 January 2013

Mr Christopher Horn
Headteacher
King Street Primary School
High Grange Road
Spennymoor
County Durham
DL16 6RA

Dear Mr Horn

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to King Street Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, two groups of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documents were scrutinised including pupils' work, information on pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings and reports from the local authority.

Context

Since the November 2012 inspection, a new Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors and two other governors have been appointed. Two part-time teachers and one teaching assistant have been appointed to provide additional support for pupils.

Main findings

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors show determination in making essential improvements to the work of the school and in tackling underachievement. The school improvement plan has been revised to focus on the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. The improvement plan contains well-focused objectives, actions and success criteria. However, specific milestones are not detailed enough for all groups of pupils so that progress can easily be measured.

Subject and other leaders are enthusiastic and have worked hard to implement a range of new systems, procedures and initiatives. However, leaders need to sharpen their focus on the areas which require most improvement and make sure they have explicit evidence of impact and improvement for individuals and groups of pupils. There are not enough opportunities for leaders to check the work in their subjects or areas, particularly through lesson observations, although they have each undertaken a 'learning walk' and scrutiny of pupils' work.

Members of the governing body are supportive of the work of the school and are developing their skills in holding the school to account. The Chair of Governors has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. However, the governing body as a whole does not yet have a structured approach to ensuring there are regular checks on the impact of the work of the school, particularly in relation to challenging the amount of progress made by pupils.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- ensure the school improvement plan contains milestones which are specific to all groups of pupils so that progress can easily be measured
- ensure all leaders have a sharper focus on the most important areas which require improvement and make sure that they can provide explicit evidence of the impact of their work for individuals and groups of pupils
- improve the leadership skills of middle leaders by ensuring they have more opportunities to check the quality of teaching and learning in the areas for which they are responsible
- review the governance procedures to ensure that governors more rigorously challenge the work of the school.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The headteacher has welcomed and benefited from support provided by the local authority, particularly from the Education Development Partner and the headteacher of a partner school who is a local leader of education. Support has also been provided for staff by Early Years consultants and the School Improvement Adviser.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Durham.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster

Her Majesty's Inspector