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25 February 2013

Mr Steve Herbert
Headteacher
Montreal CofE Primary School
Ennerdale Road
Cleator Moor
Cumbria
CA25 5LW

Dear Mr Herbert,

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

Following my visit to your school on 22 February 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 December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, teachers with leadership responsibility, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) also met all staff, toured the school and spoke with pupils. The school improvement planning and supporting documents were evaluated.

Context

A new Headteacher started at the school on 9 January 2013.

Main findings

The new headteacher has made an energetic start to tackling the areas identified as requiring improvement at the inspection in December 2012. He has led the development of a 'Rapid Action Plan' with the involvement of all staff and the Governing Body. The Plan is well organised and addresses fully all the issues identified in the inspection. Actions are appropriate and there are clear success criteria and timescales for review. A lot has been achieved in a short period of time. The plan would benefit from an indication of how and when its progress will be formally checked and its success will be gauged, including the role of the Governing Body in supporting this process.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has reviewed and amended the school's self-evaluation with staff and governors. It is thorough and provides an effective steer for improvement. Governors know the school well and are working constructively with the headteacher to improve teaching and ensure pupils achieve as well as they can.

The headteacher has held individual discussions with all staff focusing on pupils' progress, identification of targets and professional development needs. Pupils who are not making expected progress have been identified and actions to support them agreed. The headteacher has carried out lesson observations in each class. Teachers report that the professional dialogue following these observations is helpful. Written feedback clearly indicates the strengths in teaching and areas requiring improvement.

Lesson planning and approaches to assessment have been standardised across the school. The teaching timetable has been reviewed to ensure every minute of the day is used constructively. Additional time has been allocated to the teaching of literacy, including the promotion of broader reading skills. Teachers are highly positive about the changes and the strong, enthusiastic leadership they are receiving. They share the vision to ensure good quality teaching and show great commitment to improving the school. Pupils say they are enjoying the additional challenge and although they are working harder they find the work interesting.

Senior leaders and governors are taking 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:

- indicate how progress will be monitored and success will be evaluated, who will undertake this and when. Make the role of the Governing Body in supporting this process clear.

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

External support

The local authority has provided considerable support to the school during a period of instability in leadership and financial challenge. A school specific monitoring group has been monitoring the school over the last two years. The school has benefitted from links with local schools to support the development of newly qualified teachers' skills, Early Years Foundation Stage provision and literacy. The general adviser has provided appropriate support and training.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.