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7 June 2013

Mr Ian Pilkington
Headteacher
Cross Lane Primary and Nursery School
Cross Lane
Elland
West Yorkshire
HX5 0LP

Dear Mr Pilkington

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cross Lane Primary and Nursery School, Calderdale

Following my visit to your school on 6 June 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. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with yourself and your deputy head teacher. I also held meetings with middle leaders, with members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plans were evaluated together with some evidence of pupil's progress and attainment. I was also taken on a tour of the school.

Context

Since the inspection there have been no changes of staff. One teacher has returned from maternity leave and a new parent governor has joined the governing body.

Main findings

The head teacher, governors and the local authority all agree the judgements reached at the March inspection and the identified priorities for improvement, were the correct ones. Since the inspection, senior leaders have reviewed the school's development plan. Although this plan contains an outline of some of the actions leaders intend to take, there is too little clarity about what successful outcomes will look like and how progress will be measured. Consequently, leaders and governors are not able to measure precisely the impact of the current plan or effectively hold teachers to account.

Leaders and governors accept that the plan should be reviewed to provide greater clarity about what 'good' will look like and ensure that all targets and criteria communicate a clear sense of ambition and urgency.

Although leaders are monitoring the work of the school, they are not yet able to quantify the difference it is making. Leaders are aware that the current systems and plans do not support clear accountability for improvement and ensure that there is a sharp enough focus on impact. Nonetheless it is clear that outcomes are improving, for example, in the numbers of Year 1 pupils achieving the required standard in their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make. Similarly, there is evidence that the impact of a strategy to improve writing for Year 6 boys, is resulting in accelerated progress for this group.

The school's view about the strength of teaching at Cross Lane and the relatively weak progress pupils are making in mathematics do not match. Senior leaders are aware of where any residual weaknesses in teaching remain and plans are in place to address this. The school is adopting a programme to ensure that gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge are closed. Staff have received training and are beginning to implement this strategy. This, together with some reorganisation of the groups in which mathematics is taught, aims to address this issue.

Leaders and governors are beginning to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection, however, plans are not yet sharply focused on accelerating progress and checking for improvement. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- review the school's action plans and include precise, timely and measurable milestones and criteria which are clearly linked to actions
- ensure that all targets and measures in the plan reflect the ambition to get to 'good'
- ensure that all leaders focus on the impact of actions when checking the work of the school and drive improvement with a greater sense of urgency
- triangulate evidence from scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data and observations of learning and teaching to secure an accurate view of the issues in mathematics.

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 an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Previously, it has brokered a variety of support for leaders including a consultant and a local leader of education. However, the involvement with the local leader of education has ceased. Consequently, there is a need to broker further leadership support to ensure the school has a relentless drive to get to good.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector