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10 September 2013

Rachel Pearson
The Headteacher
Appleby Primary School
Station Road
Appleby in Westmorland
Cumbria
CA16 6TX

Dear Mrs Pearson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Appleby Primary School

Following my visit with Richard O'Brien Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 9 September, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report my 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 May 2013. 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 all deadlines are specified in the action plan for monitoring improvement to allow the staff responsible to give a progress report to governors every half term
- further strengthen the way in which governors monitor the performance of the school and drive improvement.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other school leaders, pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school development plans. You and I visited each classroom to meet pupils and staff and look at the changes

you have made to the school environment, for example the increased outdoor area in the Foundation Stage unit. I looked at the school's self-evaluation report following your inspection, the action plan for this year and your system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress. I met pupils from Year 5 and 6 to talk about recent changes in the school and look at examples of their writing.

Main findings

You, the governors and staff are determined to ensure the school is good. The development plan focuses clearly on the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. However, parts of it should be more precise about when and how the impact of activities will be evaluated to ensure progress for pupils is maintained.

You see the need to strengthen the quality and consistency of teaching and focus on challenging all pupils to work more independently to take responsibility for their own learning and progress. Improvements are beginning to happen; there is evidence of this in the new literacy work scrutiny assessment which enables inconsistency to be challenged. The pupils told me that there had been an increased focus on target setting and they are aware of being challenged more to extend and improve their work. Examples of where they had improved their work following comments from teachers were evident in their writing books. Pupils said that the school is improving and they are better motivated to make good progress.

In order to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress you have formalised the pupil progress meetings and made sure they have a real impact on learning. Staff training has taken place on improving the balance of teacher talk during lessons and sharing the knowledge about pupils to help their transition from one class to the next. You have introduced better processes to track and measure the impact of extra support for pupils: as a result staff are able to share information about progress and challenge pupils to reach their potential. Pupils in years 5 and 6 can identify their level of progress and say they are being challenged more in lessons. They say that they enjoy learning and know their targets.

Staff think the professional development they have received has been useful and are determined to improve the quality of teaching. Sharing good teaching through joint observations is welcomed by staff and they are keen to develop this openness through visits to other schools.

The governing body has reacted positively and is having more impact. Governors have started to review structure and procedures. However, these changes are in the early stages and the governing body should utilise the expertise of external governor support to develop their effectiveness as a driver of improvement. Training is already underway to improve the knowledge of all the governing body regarding the school's mapping of attainment and progress and the Chair of the governing body is asking more challenging questions regarding the recent results.

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

You are making good use of the support provided by the local authority prior to, and following, the recent inspection. We were assured that the temporary replacement of the local authority advisor will be fully informed of the plans to link your school with other schools for support with mathematics and leadership; and provide support to the governors. Your current school improvement advisor has confidence in the school improving quickly.

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

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- The lead inspector.