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21 November 2013

Mrs Sue Brown
Headteacher
Thorpe Willoughby Community Primary School
Londesborough Grove
Thorpe Willoughby
Selby
North Yorkshire
YO8 9NX

Dear Mrs Brown

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thorpe Willoughby Community Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 20 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 September 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 that targets to improve the quality of teaching are tailored to the needs of individual members of staff as part of the performance management process
- ensure that action plans designed to raise achievement, particularly in English and mathematics make specific reference to expected outcomes that will reflect pupils' progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated.

Main findings

The previous inspection provided a wake-up call for school leaders and governors and rightly so. Pupils' achievement has not been good enough for far too long. Any concerns that school leaders have regarding levels of attainment on entry or low achieving cohorts must not disguise the fact that the most important factor that will accelerate pupils' progress is consistently good teaching. It is therefore incumbent on school leaders at all levels to ensure that improvements to the quality of teaching are made quickly and are sustained over time.

The headteacher and the leadership team have responded positively to the challenge of becoming a good school. There is a sense of urgency and determination to secure improvements quickly. Senior leaders have set out their vision for the school and successfully communicated this to staff. A school improvement plan is in place that addresses all of key areas requiring improvement. A strong sense of teamwork is evident and this will help drive the pace of change. A number of improvements have already been secured. A school teaching and learning policy is in place that sets high expectations of classroom practice. The quality of marking is better with pupils receiving good feedback that includes suggestions about how they may improve their work. An audit of teachers' and teaching assistants' skills in relation to the teaching of mathematics has been undertaken. This has resulted in focussed professional development that includes support from a local outstanding school.

Leaders and managers at all levels are making valuable contributions to the improvement agenda. The headteacher has ensured that performance management is in place for all teachers and teaching assistants with an emphasis on improving teaching and learning. However, some of the targets pertaining to individual teachers are not specific enough. The headteacher is empowering others to take the lead on key initiatives and this proving to be an effective strategy. The special educational needs co-ordinator has reviewed pupils' learning plans, is developing the skills of those responsible for delivering intervention programmes and carefully tracks pupils' progress. The subject leaders for English and mathematics demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses relating to their subject. They are engaged in monitoring provision and checking pupils' progress. Their action plans contain a range of strategies to accelerate achievement; however the skills and knowledge that pupils are expected to demonstrate as a result are unclear.

The governing body have high aspirations for the school and are determined that the school will not find itself in this position again. A rapid improvement committee

has been established that meets every three weeks to monitor the impact of the school improvement plan. This allows governors to hold the school leadership to account and this is helping to drive the school forward.

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 is currently providing regular support to the school. The Education Development Adviser has a good working relationship with the headteacher and is intent on providing the necessary support to help take the school forward. The authority has successfully brokered a link with a local outstanding school which is helping to develop classroom practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler

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
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] – for academies