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18 December 2013

Mrs Mary Lumley
Acting Headteacher
South Milford Primary School
Sand Lane
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Leeds
LS25 5AU

Dear Mrs Lumley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to South Milford Community Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 18 December 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are starting to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure monitoring by senior leaders and subject leaders is sharply focused on identifying the aspects of provision that promote the learning of specific groups of pupils, and the barriers that hinder progress
- ensure senior leaders and governors extend the targets in the school plan and the monitoring timetable to the end of the academic year and share plans with staff and parents so that they are clear about the improvements the school expects to make.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher and governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan and other documents were scrutinised including the local authority's report following the recent review of the school.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit in October the headteacher has been absent through ill health. In her absence the school is led by an experienced acting headteacher who joined the school in November and the acting deputy headteacher.

Main findings

Governors together with the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher are now working together well to drive improvements in the school. The local authority's recent review shows that the quality of teaching is beginning to improve and teachers' latest assessments show more pupils are making expected progress. Partnerships with parents are improving and consultation with parents by governors and senior staff is starting to inform school policies. The recently produced comprehensive guide to homework is a good example of this work.

Governors are beginning to apply their recent training and they have a demonstrably clearer understanding of their responsibility to determine the strategic direction of the school through their involvement in drafting the school action plan. The inclusion of specific measurable termly targets and evaluations has brought coherence and cohesion to improvement planning. However, the timescale and targets do not extend much beyond the end of term. The school plan has been appropriately revised to include detailed actions to narrow the gaps in the attainment and progress of specific groups of pupils such as more able pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are eligible for additional support through the pupil premium funding. Senior and subject leaders are monitoring the work of the school more regularly: the current timetable extends until February 2014. Despite the frequency with which monitoring is taking place it is not informing and sharply guiding improvement. For example, work scrutiny and observations of teaching currently are not focused enough to identify the strengths in, and barriers to, the learning and progress for specific groups of pupils.

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 provided extensive support to the school since the last monitoring visit and has acted quickly to implement alternative leadership arrangements following the headteacher's absence. This has allayed the concerns of staff and parents and a productive partnership is starting to emerge. The school are drawing upon the network of support provided by partner schools and are using this to support improvements in classroom practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White

Her Majesty's Inspector