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5 November 2014

Mrs Alison Rahman
Headteacher
Long Toft Primary School
Church Road
Stainforth
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN75AB

Dear Mrs Rahman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Long Toft Primary School, Doncaster

Following my visit to your school on 4 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 June 2014. 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:

- revise the improvement plan so that it is more helpful in assisting school leaders to check the implementation and measure the impact of agreed actions
- ensure the most able pupils have appropriately challenging work, especially in mathematics, and all teachers have a consistent approach to improving spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher. Together we undertook a brief tour of the school and visited classrooms and sampled some of the work pupils had done. I met with two members of the governing body, subject coordinators and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school development plan and other monitoring evidence including performance management targets, lesson observation records, minutes from recent governing body meetings and the single central record.

Context

Since the last inspection there is one new teacher in the Foundation Stage and new teachers in Year 1 and Year 3.

Main findings

Following the inspection both staff and governors were upset and disappointed that the school went from being good to requiring improvement. However you have worked quickly to get staff and governors to accept this. Staff with whom I spoke showed a real determination to get back to being at least a good school.

No time has been wasted in getting staff to see for themselves the variability in marking. You have empowered them to suggest ways in which marking and feedback could be improved. In partnership with staff you have rapidly established a set of non-negotiables aimed at improving teaching, marking and feedback. Staff with whom I met told me they feel their views are valued and as a result are highly motivated to see the school improve.

There were early signs during our visits to classrooms that feedback to pupils has started to improve. Pupils are starting to benefit from timetabled reflection times each day which is allowing them to respond to teacher comments. We did agree that there were still occasions when the most able pupils could make faster progress, especially in mathematics and as yet there is not a consistent approach to improving pupils spelling, punctuation and grammar.

After the staffing turbulence in Key Stage 1 last year, you conveyed a sense that more stable staffing and better teaching has helped the school reach a turning point. You have sensibly directed your deputy headteacher to support staff in Key Stage 1 to help secure the anticipated improvement.

Since the inspection the governing body has changed considerably. A number of long standing governors have left and been replaced with willing but less experienced members. They are at an early stage in their development but have already demonstrated a willingness to challenge and ask pertinent questions about

pupils' achievement. You have recognised the need to develop the confidence and role of governors and have been successful in securing a National Leader of Governance for at least the next 12 months to be a member of the governing body to support, model and help other governors develop rapidly in their roles.

The school development plan does address each of the key priorities arising from the inspection. However to increase the potential of the plan to support rapid improvement greater attention is needed to having clearer timescales for when and how specific features of teaching will improve alongside measurable targets. The plan would also benefit from greater clarity around who is responsible for checking the actions have the intended impact, with more opportunity to include governors and middle leaders in this work.

External support

Following the inspection the local authority senior standards and effectiveness officer has either directly provided or brokered support in a timely fashion. This includes planned reviews of the provision in Early Years later this month and a review of governance early next year. The local authority has currently judged that the school has sufficient capacity to improve, as the headteacher has been a local leader in education and so chosen not to partner the school with a good or outstanding school. The senior standards and effectiveness officer is now a member of the newly created school improvement committee and the intention is for him to model for governors ways of challenging leaders effectively. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of this initiative.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body