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Mr Tim Hiley
Headteacher
Helmsley Community Primary School
Carlton Lane
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York
North Yorkshire
YO62 5HB

Dear Mr Hiley

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

Following my visit to your school on 5 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 July 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:

- Prioritise and strengthen leaders' monitoring of the progress of lower attaining pupils and rigorously check the impact that additional support is making to close the gaps in achievement for this group of pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, the Chair of Governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and a sample of the school's monitoring records and Year 5 and 6 pupils' books were scrutinised.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, one class teacher has left and the number of pupils on roll at the school has fallen slightly to 150. The number of classes has reduced from five to four. Two teachers are leaving at the end of term and arrangements are being made to replace them.

Main findings

The school's action plan covers all the areas for improvement. Governors are closely monitoring its implementation through the rapid improvement group. Expectations of subject leadership are clearer: middle leaders say that there is now more direction and accountability required in their work. However, accountability for checking the impact that initiatives are having on the progress of the less able pupils needs further clarification. Currently leaders are unclear about their responsibilities in this respect. Pupil progress meetings are taking place more frequently and this has led to early identification of the children who need additional support in order to reach challenging targets. Parents, whose children need additional support to catch-up, are better informed about the programme of work for their children but at this stage, all parents do not receive sufficient information about what their children are learning in each subject in the curriculum.

Year 2 and Year 6 mathematics tests and pupils' work have been analysed carefully by the subject leader to inform a very clear plan of what the school needs to do to raise achievement. The teaching of mathematics is changing. Training for teachers and sessions to explain to parents how the school intends to teach mathematics has taken place. Teachers are starting to use the better resources and pupils are responding: they are beginning to develop greater confidence, understanding and recall of key mathematical facts. The school's monitoring demonstrates that the new calculation policy is being implemented consistently by staff.

Pupils are starting to become aware of the school's higher expectations of their writing. Examples of good writing are being used more frequently, but not consistently. Good writing is beginning to be celebrated and displayed in the school. Teachers have started to plan more opportunities for pupils to write in subjects other than English. However this is at very early stages. The quality of the writing and pupils learning and progress has yet to be closely monitored. This is planned for the next two weeks.

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 school is drawing effectively on the advice provided by the local authority to support subject leaders in mathematics, English and special educational needs in

developing their roles. Pupils are starting to make faster progress in using and applying calculation and solving problems. As a result of the advice and guidance from the school's local authority adviser target setting has become more challenging and sharper. In consultation with the local authority the school have begun to identify good and outstanding schools to work with to support specific aspects of their work to improve mathematics, reading and writing and to develop the quality of teaching and leadership. Joint work has been planned and is due to begin in the next few days.

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