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Mrs Fiona Beetles
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Beetles

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sutton-in-Craven Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 December 2017, 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 October 2016. 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 in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- pay even closer attention to the progress of the most able pupils, including average prior attaining pupils who may be capable of reaching a higher standard
- keep an even sharper eye on the progress pupils make from their earlier starting points, not just the progress they make in any one year.

Evidence

I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the mathematics leader. Together, we visited all classes in key stage 2 and looked at a sample of pupils' mathematics workbooks. I examined assessment information, the school improvement plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body, leaders' monitoring notes, and records of local authority visits to the school. I talked with a few parents, met with two representatives of the local authority and met with five governors, including the two co-chairs.

Context

A teacher, who was also the special educational needs coordinator, has left the school. You have appointed a newly qualified teacher to teach in Year 5. There have been a few changes to support staffing. A few governors have left and a few have joined the governing body. Two governors now share the role of chair of the governing body.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, leadership capacity has substantially increased. More teachers now have leadership responsibility. Along with your deputy, and with the help of external professionals, you have trained and coached middle leaders. You make sure they concentrate on the most important priorities.

The school improvement plan identifies the right priorities because you and your team have accurately evaluated where the strengths and weaknesses are in the quality of teaching and in pupils' outcomes. The plan appropriately emphasises what pupils need to learn. Leaders and governors are clear about what exactly should improve, and by when.

Leaders are regularly checking the quality of teaching. Crucially, they look carefully for the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning and their progress. You and other leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses in teachers' practice and work closely with teachers to help them to develop further. As a result, teaching has improved. You recognise that the quality of teaching is not consistently strong in all classes at all times.

The improvements in teaching are evident in the 2017 test results, which are considerably better than the 2016 results. This stronger achievement is reflected in the progress of year groups across the school. In particular, more of the most able pupils are working at a higher standard. You are not complacent and understand that the broadly average progress overall achieved by last year's leavers is a base

upon which to build. Furthermore, you acknowledge the need to make sure leaders shine an even brighter light on the learning of the most able pupils, including those who may only have average prior attainment but are capable of achieving greater depth in their learning.

The much improved assessment system helps leaders and teachers to keep a close eye on each pupil's progress, as well as on the progress of groups, such as the disadvantaged and the most able. Leaders set suitably challenging pupil progress targets. You recognise that leaders need to look more often at the progress pupils have made over a longer period of time and not just in the current year, to make sure they are catching up where they may have previously fallen behind.

You have acted upon the findings of the external pupil premium review and the advice of an external consultant. Leaders are now precisely identifying individual barriers to learning and watching the progress of disadvantaged pupils carefully.

You have overhauled the way teachers teach mathematics. This is developing pupils' ability to reason and explain their thinking. Pupils have daily opportunities to attempt mathematical problems that are more challenging. Teachers need to challenge the most able pupils further still with even trickier problems. Some gaps in conceptual understanding are still apparent for a few of the oldest pupils due to earlier, weaker teaching. A minority of pupils in Years 5 and 6 still have some way to go to catch up in their mathematics learning if they are to reach the expected standard before they leave the school this year and next.

Governors have acted upon the recommendations of an external review of governance, taking a root and branch approach to improving the effectiveness of their work. As a result, governance has improved enormously. The governing body has a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Governors know, for example, in which year groups which subjects are weaker and in which they are stronger. They ask challenging questions and rightly expect leaders to bring about further improvements in pupils' outcomes.

External support

Representatives of the local authority have helped you to sharpen the leadership skills of your team. They have made regular and thorough checks to ensure that the support they have given has been effective. The local authority recognises the many successes to which it has contributed, for example in the teaching of phonics in the early years and in Year 1, but is not complacent, understanding that there is plenty of scope for further improvements in pupils' progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi
Her Majesty's Inspector