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Mr M Watt
Acting Executive Headteacher
Aiskew, Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Watt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Aiskew, Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 March 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to ensure that the full impact of recent changes are sustained, by:

- ensuring that all pupils, and especially the most able, are encouraged to achieve the best they can through work that is challenging and interesting
- making sure vacancies on the school governing body are filled.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, governors, two representatives of the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Leeds to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

A learning walk was undertaken and discussions held with pupils about their work. The school's assessment information about the progress and achievement of pupils was reviewed.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in March 2017, turbulence in school staffing has continued. Two of the five teachers have left the school, a further two will leave at the end of term and one member of staff is absent on maternity leave. The headteacher at the time of the previous inspection is currently absent from school. An interim headteacher joined the school in September 2017 for half a term. Since 1 November 2017, you and an assistant headteacher from Colburn Community Primary School are working part time at the school to provide leadership to staff and pupils. The number of pupils currently on roll has reduced to 49.

Main findings

Instability in leadership and staff absence have hindered the actions taken by leaders, governors and the local authority to develop the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement. Many pupils continue to work below the standard they are capable of. Results, especially in key stage 1 tests, were significantly low in summer 2017. The most able pupils are not challenged consistently. During this visit, key stage 2 pupils explained that due to frequent changes of teachers, 'Sometimes we learn the same things' and 'Work is too easy.' The school is not using information from assessments well enough to make sure that all pupils undertake work that is challenging.

You and your assistant headteacher have been at the school a total of 17 and 15 days respectively. During this period you have worked quickly to review the work taking place in classrooms, identify the barriers in pupils' learning, and develop realistic short-term plans to tackle them. You have also worked with teachers in classrooms to coach and support them. It is clear from visits to lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils and staff that you are making a striking and positive start on the plans. Pupils are excited by new projects that are capturing their interest and enthusiasm for learning, especially in reading. You have introduced a wider range of resources to revive the teaching of mathematics. Teachers' assessments identify what pupils can do, and, most importantly, where they struggle. Focused teaching is beginning to take place to help secure basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Some pupils recognise that they are making swifter progress in their learning. For example, a Year 4 pupil said, 'I didn't understand tens and units, but now I really do.' Increasingly, pupils are becoming more confident in their learning. Together with governors and the local authority and diocese officers, you recognise that these very recent promising developments need to be sustained.

In the last few months, pupils' understanding about the behaviour expected of them is becoming clearer as a result of teachers implementing a revised behaviour policy.

Pupils like the rewards and sanctions and the opportunity to make choices about the activities they can do during 'golden time'. Many pupils are beginning to recognise that their actions have consequences. Detailed and systematic records of behaviour incidents, including occasional bullying, and the actions taken, are kept. However, this information is not analysed well enough to identify where the school might improve behaviour further.

Governors are starting to receive a greater level and accuracy of information than previously as a result of the recent monitoring you have undertaken, including the assessment of pupils' attainment. As a result, they have a realistic view of pupils' progress and also what is not working well in the school. This insight has helped to advise the decisions they have taken, to reduce the number of classes and to inform school plans to March 2018. They have ensured that all classes have teachers and they have worked with Colburn Community Primary School to appoint a teacher for the new term for the early years and key stage 1 class. Children in the early years have more opportunities to learn through play as a result of the additional resources invested in this area of the school. Governors are determined to provide the best conditions for pupils' achievement and the school's improvement to be realised. However, the governing body currently has a number of vacancies and this requires additional help from the local authority and the diocese to fill them and ensure a thorough induction for new governors.

External support

The local authority finance, human resources and school improvement services provide effective support for governors to manage the finances and take informed decisions for day-to-day management of pupils' learning and safety during staff absence. The additional support provided by you and the assistant headteacher from Colburn Community Primary School, a good school, is helping to provide a vision and move the school forward. As a result, staff and governors are evaluating their school with greater accuracy and have established a firm plan for improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, 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

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector