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Mrs Angela Cottam
Headteacher
Ribchester St Wilfrid's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mrs Cottam

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ribchester St Wilfrid's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 February 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 February 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 to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- make sure pupils develop better problem-solving skills in mathematics
- sharpen the criteria used to measure success in the school improvement plan
- strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1 so pupils achieve all they are capable of.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders. I spoke to

staff about their work. I met with three members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I reviewed a range of documentation including the school improvement plan. With you, I toured the school to observe pupils at work.

Context

Since the previous inspection, teaching staff have changed in three of the four classes. One teacher has returned to the school following an extended period of leave. One teacher has left. A new teacher with a leadership role joined the team in September 2016. There are no longer supply teachers covering classes for lengthy periods of time.

Main findings

While the judgements of the February 2016 inspection were unexpected, leaders, governors and staff accept that the school needs to provide a better standard of education. You have established a clear, shared focus for all those involved with the school to improve teaching, pupils' progress and the work of leaders and governors.

Leaders and staff have maintained the successful teaching identified previously in Years 5 and 6. Nevertheless, you are continuing to improve teaching further. You are working well to increase the progress made by older pupils, because this is not as strong as it could be given their above-average attainment.

Initially, the quality of education in the lower juniors proved hard to shift. You are steadily increasing the extra support for pupils now in Years 4 and 5 to make up for past weaknesses in teaching: these previously held back pupils' learning. Due to the well-considered recruitment of additional expertise to the staff team, strong teaching has now been re-established in Years 3 and 4. Throughout the junior department, there are now high expectations among staff. Teaching is becoming much more skilful and making much better use of assessments of pupils' abilities.

You have identified correctly that not enough teaching in Years 1 and 2 is successful. National assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2016 show that some pupils did not make as much progress as they should have in their reading, writing and mathematics. In the Year 1 assessment of phonics, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard dropped sharply to only half of the class. You have put clear and well-considered support in place to raise the quality of teaching, but it is too soon to see the full benefit of this. You and governors recognise the crucial importance of this matter if the school is to become good by the time of the next inspection.

The teaching of writing is improving well because staff training, teamwork and the planning and review of teaching have been overhauled carefully by leaders. Pupils now have many more regular and meaningful opportunities to write. Careful

reorganisation of the teaching of spelling and handwriting is impacting positively on the standard of pupils' work in English. Clear steps are being taken to extend pupils' writing in geography, history and science.

Staff have accessed more training to improve their teaching of mathematics and this is enhancing their confidence. Links with other schools have recently been established to draw on their expertise in mathematics. Further developments are planned. As it is too soon to see the impact of these actions on pupils' learning, leaders and governors recognise that improving pupils' abilities to solve mathematical problems remains a key priority for the school.

Because of careful recruitment by leaders and governors, and close links with the local authority, the work of the senior leadership team has strengthened. Fresh ideas and insights are being debated regularly by leaders. Leaders are united in their focus on improvement and bringing about much-needed change in teaching, learning and leadership. Responsibilities for leading the work of the school are now shared better between staff. Leaders' checks on the quality of what is happening in the school are now much more precise, frequent and challenging.

Staff and leaders have worked successfully to improve learning for children in Reception. Better provision is now made to challenge young children in their learning. Resources are set out and used much more thoughtfully. The Reception classroom is becoming an increasingly attractive and enjoyable place to learn. As at the time of the previous inspection, in summer 2016 the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the time they leave Reception was broadly average. Nevertheless, information shows that not all boys are prepared well for their move to Year 1, including in their reading skills. Opportunities for boys' learning are now being planned with more care and boys are beginning to achieve more highly.

An external review of governance was undertaken promptly by a national leader for governance. Reviews of improvement in governance continue to be regular and detailed. Through the participation of a local authority adviser in governing body meetings, governors are learning how to challenge and review the work of the school. Governors have reorganised and strengthened how they work. For example, the new standards and effectiveness committee is keeping a close eye on improvement within the school. Governors are visiting the school more frequently and asking for more evidence to support leaders' evaluations of the school's performance. They now monitor the school improvement plan carefully. Governors have an accurate understanding of the issues identified at the previous inspection and what more the school needs to do to move further forward.

The school's improvement plan is structured carefully around the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Actions taken by leaders to address key issues are tracked clearly. However, the criteria set to measure success are not always specific enough to show how improvement will be assured.

External support

You are drawing successfully on the focused support available through the local authority and your local network of schools. Teachers, leaders and governors are benefiting from the thoughtful support provided by local authority officers. Consequently, the subject expertise of staff is increasing in English and mathematics and the quality of teaching in the early years and key stage 2 is improving steadily. You are committed to continuing your regular discussions with local authority representatives because you are keen to bring as much help to the school as you can.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan

Her Majesty's Inspector