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Mr Kevin Lee
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Dear Mr Lee

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Moorlands CofE Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 28 April 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 September 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:

- strengthen the measures for success in the action plan, including tighter timescales and linking evidence to impact on teaching and pupils' outcomes
- establish a suitably broad curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the chair of the local governing body, members of the trust and pupils to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. The school's single change plan (action plan) was evaluated. A range of documentation and

arrangements were scrutinised, including those relating to self-evaluation and safeguarding pupils.

Context

Having secured appropriate governance, additional support from an experienced chair of governors has ended and a new chair of the local governing body has been appointed.

Main findings

The dedication and hard work of the whole staff team, beginning to bear fruit at the time of the previous inspection, continue to make a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Over the past year, a sustained period of stability and improvements in the quality of teaching and assessment have successfully raised pupils' attainment. The checks on pupils' achievements, including external validation, confirm the accuracy of teachers' assessments and show that increasing proportions of pupils reach age-related attainment. The improvements are more noticeable in writing and mathematics than in reading, and in the early years and key stage 1 than in key stage 2.

The decision to narrow the curriculum to focus on literacy and numeracy has served the intended short-term purpose of building pupils' confidence and proficiency in basic skills. In Years 5 and 6, the priorities to identify and fill the gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are working well to raise attainment. In general, the need to make up for lost learning in previous years is now not so necessary in Years 4, 3, 2 and 1, where steady and sustained progress through the English and mathematics curriculum is evident. Appropriate additional support is in place to secure pupils' phonic skills by the end of key stage 1, but is not yet having the desired effect. Provision in the early years has been enhanced by increasing opportunities for purposeful activities, inside and outdoors.

Pupils are enthusiastic about the challenges presented in mathematics lessons, actively making choices that make them think hard. The value of learning from mistakes, and approaching problems through trial and error, is well understood. Staff skilfully support pupils of all abilities to persevere at tasks for long periods, intervening with the right help at the right time. The calculation policy, non-existent shortly before the previous inspection, is now well implemented and makes a good contribution to the confidence of staff and pupils, as well as to the systematic planning and teaching of numeracy.

A particular feature of teaching is the extended opportunities for pupils to apply what they know and can do. The development of skills in a logical sequence, together with precise teaching, helps pupils to get on with practising skills at their own level of competency swiftly and with confidence. Classrooms often give pupils the prompts, ideas and checks that they need to apply what they learn successfully,

such as useful vocabulary or examples of how the four rules of computation have been applied by pupils.

It is appropriate that, from September 2017, the curriculum balance will be redressed to devote more time to subjects other than English and mathematics, and to broaden the content of the mathematics curriculum. Some changes have been made, but the curriculum is now in need of more extensive revision. Pupils are very aware, and articulate the changes that have taken place throughout this academic year and the difference that they make to them. The visits by, and correspondence with, authors are particularly enjoyed and memorable. The extended range of library books and the more-complex texts used in English lessons are proving to be very popular and pupils express increased enjoyment of reading. Many pupils are becoming avid readers. The knowledge and skills gained through reading, such as creating ideas, understanding a plot and experiencing a wider range of vocabulary, are starting to have a positive effect on the quality of pupils' writing.

Pupils set out their writing and mathematics work neatly. The quality of handwriting has improved considerably. Pupils are proud of their work and have established good habits in how best to present their ideas and calculations. Sustained pieces of literacy and numeracy provide good opportunities for pupils to show what they can do. There is some inconsistency in the quality of the extended pieces of work. Some pupils and teachers focus on presentation without equal praise for the content of the work.

Leaders and governors expect that the school will provide a securely good standard of education for pupils by September 2018. This monitoring inspection suggests that, after eight months, the school is on track to achieve the necessary improvements within the projected timescale. A key feature of the success to date is the methodical approach to action planning, with pupils' progress as the starting point for all areas of the school's work. The single change plan, set up annually, has almost run its course and has done its job in setting the school on a firm footing for further improvement. The evidence used to measure success through the plan is not consistently matched well to teaching and learning or as wide-ranging as it needs to be to monitor its impact thoroughly.

Middle leaders, new to their responsibilities at the time of the previous inspection, are very clear about how effectively they contribute to the school's single plan for improvement. Having grown in confidence, they play a much greater part in the school's improvement than was the case at the time of the previous inspection. They know the rates of improvement across the school, and can identify where the strengths and weaknesses are and why. Having been guided well by senior staff, middle leaders are now well placed to take more responsibility and initiative in their areas of responsibility.

You have recently strengthened the arrangements to safeguard pupils, having taken stock of the effectiveness of the procedures. The safeguarding policy is fit for

purpose. The single central register of checks on staff's suitability to work with children shows the appropriate range of information. Training for staff, including for those designated staff for child protection, is at an appropriate level and up to date.

External support

You are open and responsive to advice, which has contributed well to the rapid improvement in the school's work over the past year. Clear lines of responsibility and accountability across the trust, including those for the school's leaders, are well understood by all involved.

Staff make good use of the training provided by the trust. The training helps to build the confidence of teachers and leaders.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector