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Mr John Mollard
Headteacher
Furness Vale Primary School
Buxton Road
Furness Vale
SK23 7PQ

Dear Mr Mollard

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Furness Vale Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 May 2013. 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:

- sharpen your school development plan by including extra milestones relating to pupils' achievement, so that governors can hold leaders to account for the rate of improvement more effectively.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the assistant headteacher, the chair and a member of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We made short visits to all classes which included looking at a range of pupils' work. I reviewed your most recent data on pupils' attainment and progress. I evaluated your school action plan.

Context

Since September 2013, pupils in Year 6 are taught as a separate class each morning.

Main findings

You have quickly developed the skills of senior leaders in checking more rigorously the quality of teaching in the school. Staff have responded positively to the more frequent and precise recommendations on how they can improve their practice. Teachers are using their assessment of pupils' learning more accurately. This is making sure that pupils of different abilities are being provided with more challenging work. Teachers are making it clear to pupils what they are expected to achieve by the end of every lesson. As a result, pupils are more engaged in their learning and are working more productively. Pupils are improving their skills in writing, because they have more opportunities in which to produce longer pieces of work in a range of subjects. Pupils are now responding more often to teachers' marking. As a result, they are more aware of how well they are doing and what they have to do next to improve their work. Your most recent checks show that the quality of teaching is improving.

Governors have benefitted from undertaking an external review of governance. They are increasingly holding leaders to account for the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Governors know that due to improvements in teaching, most pupils in each year group are making faster rates of progress in English and mathematics than at the time of the section 5 inspection. This is helping to raise standards across the school.

Your school development plan is detailed and clearly sets out a timetable of the actions to be taken in order to secure further improvement. Although the plan contains clear success criteria about pupils' achievements, there are too few of these. The lack of frequent measurable criteria makes it difficult for governors to check that the current rate of improvement is being sustained.

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 local authority has intensified its support to the school since the section 5 inspection. This has included an external moderation of the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work. This has ensured that teachers are now planning work which meets the needs of pupils of different abilities.

The local authority advisor has helped senior leaders to develop their skills in evaluating more accurately the impact of teaching on pupils' achievements. As a result, leadership has been strengthened.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

David Carter
Her Majesty's Inspector