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20 September 2013

Mrs Tamara Rolfs  
Headteacher  
St James' Church of England Aided Infant School  
Leonard Street  
Derby  
DE23 8EG

Dear Mrs Rolfs

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St James' Church of England Aided Infant School**

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 incisive and urgent action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- improve the teaching in the nursery as rapidly as the teaching in the Reception class and Key Stage 1
- build on the significant improvement to attendance and punctuality since the last inspection by enforcing rigorously the new attendance legislation regarding families that take extended holidays in term time.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the assistant headteacher, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the member of staff responsible for attendance to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Assessment information, marking and assessment in books and the school records of teachers' performance in lessons was

scrutinised. I visited all four classes in the school to observe the teaching and learning.

## **Main findings**

School leaders and governors are determined to improve the school to good and have taken very effective steps so far. School plans and procedures to check the work of the school are rigorous and well thought through. Teachers and teaching assistants are well supported by training that is highly relevant to improving teaching and learning.

School leaders and governors have reacted dynamically to the requirement to improve teaching. Assessment information, records of lesson observations and work in books show that teaching in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2 has improved strongly since the previous inspection and is usually good. Learning has improved in the nursery where children gain from the additional support of the assistant headteacher and the well trained teaching assistants, but teaching is not improving at as fast a rate as the rest of the school.

Strongly improved teaching has resulted in pupils making much faster progress in the Reception class. Nearly all children enter the nursery with skill development that is typically lower or much lower than expected. Assessment information shows that many more children than expected achieved their early learning goals in many areas of learning because of an acceleration in progress in the summer term. In Key Stage 1, pupils now make good progress in both classes. The current Year 2 pupils are well placed to achieve standards that are average or above because of the good progress they made last year which narrowed the achievement gap considerably between their standards and the expected level.

The attendance rate of pupils has risen strongly since the inspection. The attendance rate during the 2012/13 school year was the highest it has been for the last three years and was much closer to average. The remaining barrier that the school has to overcome is the relatively high proportion of families that take their children on extended holidays. The school is currently implementing plans to meet the requirement of the recent legislation about attendance. However, the impact of this is not yet established.

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 governors and school leaders appreciate the improvements in the support of the local authority over the last year. The school leaders and governors have strengthened management procedures as a result of the advice and challenge offered by the local authority advisor, particularly with regard to the achievement of

pupils, the quality of the development plan and the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Derby City and the Director of Education for the Derby Diocesan Board of Education.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**