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Mr Chris Jones
Headteacher
St James' CofE Controlled Primary School
Chadwick Street
Glossop
SK13 8EF

Dear Mr Jones

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St James' CofE Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 November 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:

- work with the local authority to identify a suitable local partner school recognised for its good or better practice in mathematics.
- ensure that staff work with a local authority mathematics consultant, or a successful leader of mathematics in a partner school, to introduce an effective school calculation policy. It should be designed to ensure greater consistency in the ways that teachers expect pupils to calculate numbers, and to raise the expectations of what pupils can achieve. The policy should also be shared with parents and carers to help them to understand how they can support their child's learning in mathematics more effectively.
- ensure that the headteacher and representatives of the governing body attend a regional Ofsted 'Better Governance' conference in the summer term 2014, to support the further improvement of the skills of the governing body.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, with other senior leaders, and with representatives of the governing body, including the Chair, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The school development plan was evaluated, and a number of other documents were checked, including the outcomes of leaders' monitoring activities, and minutes from governing body meetings. You accompanied me on a tour of the school, which included drop-ins to all classes, to observe pupils while they were learning.

Main findings

You have responded positively to the outcomes of the last inspection and you show a clear determination to improve the school. Members of staff and the school's governing body are equally determined to improve their performance to ensure that the quality of teaching, and pupils' achievement, become consistently good as soon as possible.

The work you are doing to improve the quality of teachers' marking and written feedback to pupils is particularly impressive. You have agreed a new marking policy with staff, and leaders are ensuring that staff implement the policy consistently well. As a result, pupils understand how they can improve their work and are more aware of the next steps of learning that they need to take.

You have also improved the rigour of the school's systems to track pupils' progress. For example, staff now check pupils' work on a weekly basis to ensure that any pupils who fall behind are identified quickly, and that appropriate support is provided to help them to catch up.

There is evidence in pupils' books, and in the school's tracking documents, to show that different groups of pupils are beginning to make better progress in mathematics. However, some gaps in their learning remain. For example, many pupils in Key Stage 2 are unable to recall multiplication facts with speed, confidence and accuracy. This slows their progress over time in mathematics. There is also a lack of consistency in the ways in which pupils are taught to calculate numbers. This is because staff have not yet agreed a calculation policy to outline how they should do this. I know that you would welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with a school that has a proven track record of ensuring that pupils make good or better progress in mathematics.

Teachers have improved the quality of their lesson plans to promote a sharper focus on learning, and consider the needs of pupils of different abilities more carefully. However, different leaders, including subject leaders, understand that they now

need to observe teaching more frequently to help identify how it can become consistently good or better across the school.

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 provided appropriate support to the school since the last inspection in November 2013. For example, the school's improvement advisor has provided training for staff to help them to improve their understanding of data about pupils' achievement. As a result, staff now have clearer expectations of what pupils should achieve and there is evidence that pupils are beginning to make better progress. The school's leadership team has been supported effectively to help improve the quality of the school's development plan.

The local authority is determined to help the school to continue to improve. It has agreed to help the school to find a suitable partner school recognised for its success in ensuring that pupils make good or better progress in mathematics. It has also agreed to support staff in devising a suitable school calculation policy.

Governors are working with an external advisor to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the governing body. As a result of this work, the governing body has decided to reorganise the structure of its committees to enable it to focus more closely on pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and safety, and the quality of leadership and management. Newly appointed 'subject link governors' are also working closely with leaders to play a more active role in monitoring the work of the school for themselves. For example, link governors have worked with leaders to check the implementation of the school's new marking policy.

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

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector