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31 January 2014

Mrs Andrea Grist  
Headteacher  
Russell Hall Primary School  
West End  
Queensbury  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire  
BD13 2AW

Dear Mrs Grist

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Russell Hall Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 30 January 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:

- ensure that data sets available to governors track the progress of key groups of pupils more effectively. Governors understanding of this data needs to be further developed
- establish a partnership with a good or outstanding school so consistent approaches to getting to good are supported.

## **Evidence**

During my visit, I had conversations with you and your senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The schools' plan for improvement was evaluated. A brief visit to all classrooms in the school was undertaken. I looked at reading journals and spoke with some parents.

## **Context**

The school has had a change in headteacher since the last inspection. The current headteacher has been in post since the start of this term.

## **Main findings**

You and your staff have made an effective start to your school becoming good. This is because you have built on the work started by the previous headteacher and her leadership team. Prompt action to start to address the areas for improvement has been taken and a plan about how you intend to improve is in place. The change in headteacher has not deflected the school from moving forward. This is because the continuity in implementing school improvement activities during the transition has been well supported by the assistant headteachers.

Your plans for improving the school are detailed with appropriate actions identified and robust monitoring processes in place. Governors and staff have a good understanding about what the school needs to do to get to good. This is because they have contributed to developing and redrafting the plans. The plan has milestones to measure the impact of the actions being taken. Targets are clearly focussed on improvements in teaching and the progress pupils are making. Some further refinement of these targets will help school leaders track the impact actions are having on specific groups of pupils.

The school has acted promptly to address the key areas identified in the recent inspection. There has been an initial focus on reading phonics (the sounds that letters make) and identifying the needs of groups of learners, especially the more able. A range of actions have been taken. These include benchmarking reading levels across year groups and identifying levels for current readers. Staff have received training and reviewed the provision of phonics and spelling across the school and this is now a priority in their planning. Action has been taken to engage parents more directly with pupils' reading at home. Parents now have a clearer view about the level a child is reading at. These actions are beginning to show impact. Evidence seen in reading journals and parent's comments show books are well received and valued by pupils. Recent screening shows improvements in how well pupils are doing in developing early phonics. A 'Big Reading Plan' developed with parents, governors and members of staff aims to develop these initiatives further.

Plans to improve the quality of learning in school are well focussed. The performance of teachers is closely monitored with support programmes put in place

to help teachers develop and share best practice and to accelerate the improvement of teaching to good and better. Support staff now receive weekly training on supporting learners in the classroom. A range of whole staff training has been undertaken which includes meeting the needs of higher ability pupils. Pupil progress meetings are now held regularly with an emphasis on a wider team approach to addressing individual pupils' needs.

The governing body have a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. This is because they have been fully involved in overseeing and contributing to the plans for improvement. Since the inspection they have reviewed their monitoring role and started a programme of visits including attending pupil progress meetings. Some training in accessing and using various sources of school data has been undertaken. Governors plan to deepen their understanding of how the school data can inform their judgements effectively.

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 is providing effective support for the school. They know the school well and have a programme of half termly monitoring visits.

Other sources of external support are provided by a range of consultants commissioned by the school and an active local partnership of schools. The range of external support accessed by the school has at times provided conflicting advice.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy