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Mrs Joanne Williams
Headteacher
East Stanley School
Chester Road
East Stanley
Stanley
County Durham
DH9 0TN

Dear Mrs Williams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to East Stanley School, Durham

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:

- make sure that the school improvement plan contains measurable targets and milestones for all year groups so that leaders and managers can check all pupils' progress more readily
- include teaching assistants in pupil progress meetings so that they can also be held accountable for the progress pupils make
- ensure governors further develop their role in checking and evaluating the work of the school.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with you, other senior and subject leaders, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and looked at a range of documents including minutes of governing body meetings, the outcomes of monitoring activities and samples of pupils' work. You accompanied me on a tour of the school.

Context

Since the inspection in November 2013, one part-time teacher has resigned.

Main findings

You, other leaders and governors have amended the school improvement plan to include the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. While the plan contains clear milestones and aspirational targets for current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, it does not contain specific targets for all year groups, although this information is available in other documents. This weakens the extent to which the school improvement plan can be used to support improvement across the school and places limitations on how leaders and governors can check on pupils' progress.

Evidence shows that you and other leaders are checking on pupils' attainment and progress through conducting regular meetings with teachers. You are quickly identifying any pupils who are underachieving and are holding teachers to account for the actions they take to help pupils improve their work. This includes more-able pupils and particularly pupils' achievement in mathematics. As yet, teaching assistants are not included in these meetings and therefore do not have the opportunity to explain the impact of their work on the outcomes for the pupils they support.

Teachers now have a clearer picture of what is expected of them and how they can improve their practise because leaders are giving individualised support and guidance to staff through mentoring and coaching strategies. This is being developed further through regular lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and by reviewing teachers' planning. The impact of this is clearly recorded and shows where targets have been set for individual teachers and when and how these targets have been met. The school's performance management systems have been revised and these are now more closely linked to the 'Teachers standards'. Pupils report that their work is now more challenging, particularly in mathematics and for more-able pupils and evidence of this can be seen in pupils' books.

While the Chair of the Governing Body regularly visits the school and has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas to be improved, not all governors are visiting the school and checking for themselves how well the school is doing.

Governors have indicated that they wish to establish 'link' governors to work with staff and leaders, but this system is not yet fully in place. However, you do provide detailed information in your reports to the governing body and minutes of the meetings record that governors are asking challenging questions to check on the work of 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 acted quickly to support the school and the number of visits from the Education Development Partner has increased. She is challenging the school to improve and, along with other local authority staff, has conducted a joint scrutiny of pupils' work with senior leaders. Advice given following this has contributed to improvements in the quality of marking and feedback and the setting of more challenging work for pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster
Her Majesty's Inspector