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Mrs Catherine Fenton
Headteacher
Church Road Primary School
Captains Clough Road
Bolton
Lancashire
BL1 5RU

Dear Mrs Fenton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Church Road Primary School, Bolton

Following my visit to your school on 31 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 January 2014. 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:

- tweak the school development plan to give greater priority to the areas of improvement identified at the last inspection
- ensure that as many pupils as possible reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check
- ensure that all staff are consistently following the marking and feedback procedures and that pupils are given time to respond to the teachers' comments.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and the deputy head, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and two groups of pupils. I evaluated the school development plan and scrutinised other key documentation. I also had the opportunity to accompany you on a tour of the school and look at some pupils' work.

Context

Since the last inspection, you have appointed two additional experienced teaching assistants to work with Key Stage 1 pupils.

Main findings

Although you were very disappointed with the recent inspection judgement, you have used it as a catalyst for a renewed focus on improvement, particularly in Key Stage 1. The school's development plan is a detailed document which explains how leaders will bring about sustained improvement. This is a working document, which is updated monthly and shared with all staff. The key areas for improvement identified in the last inspection have been highlighted within the general improvement goals but the plan does not provide sufficient detail on how specific actions will address all aspects of the points contained within the report.

You responded swiftly and decisively to the areas of concern which were raised at the last inspection about Key Stage 1 provision. You made changes to the way the curriculum is organised in Years 1 and 2 and ensured that the pupils in these classes are always supported by experienced teaching assistants. The learning mentor is also spending more time with Year 1 which is having a positive impact on their learning. As a result of these actions, some pupils are already making better progress. The biggest impact can be seen in the progress that many Year 2 pupils are making in reading. This is a result of many staff across the school volunteering their time to do one-to-one reading sessions with a number of pupils. Despite various actions which you have taken, you are aware that more needs to be done to ensure as many pupils as possible reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

During our tour of the school, it was clear to me that children in all classes were very much engaged in their learning. This very positive attitude to learning was also evident when I talked to groups of pupils. They were reflective and articulate and keen to do well. Some of the more able pupils did, however, express some concern about work sometimes being too easy and not feeling challenged, particularly at the start of lessons. The pupils liked 'fix it' time and felt that it helped them to improve. The older ones in particular would like to be given more time to respond to the teacher comments. You have taken this on board and plan to give this a higher

priority across the school. When I looked at pupils work, it was clear that not all staff are using the marking procedures effectively.

There is agreement across the school that the measures you have introduced to help all pupils to manage their behaviour have had impact. All the pupils I spoke to felt that behaviour had got better and talked positively about the reward stickers and 'golden tickets'. However, although they acknowledged the improvements in this area, some felt that that it could get even better. As one pupil said, 'In my class, there's still some messing about.'

The governors are a strength of the school. Their immediate response to the recent inspection was to set up a monitoring group which meets frequently. Members of this group possess the sharp skills required to ask the right questions about pupils' learning and progress. Governors work very closely with senior leaders, and see the journey of improvement very much as a joint effort.

External support

You value the support and challenge which you receive from the local authority officer linked to the school. He is a member of the recently formed monitoring group and the governors also value his input. He knows the school well and consequently can tailor the support to meet your needs. The local authority carried out a post-inspection review in March and will follow this up with a full review in July. The local authority will also be carrying out a review of governance in June.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne

Her Majesty's Inspector