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Miss Christine Meekley
Headteacher
Cheadle Heath Primary School
Edgeley Road
Cheadle Heath
Stockport
SK3 0RJ

Dear Miss Meekley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cheadle Heath Primary School, Stockport

Following my visit to your school on 17 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 April 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:

- develop curricular guidance for teachers, in the light of the new National Curriculum in mathematics, to support pupils' fluency and depth of learning and their progression in strands of mathematics over time
- ensure areas for improvement pinpointed through monitoring activities are followed through rigorously and quickly.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, the subject leaders for English, mathematics and the humanities, the Chair and two other governors, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. You and I observed jointly parts of lessons in the Key Stage 2 classes (Years 3 to 6) and a phonics session. I scrutinised a sample of pupils' work across the whole age range, with a particular focus on writing and mathematics. I read various documents including the school's improvement plan and your update on actions taken so far, minutes of governors' meetings, subject leaders' folders of

evidence, and analyses of the school's data including results of the 2014 National Curriculum assessments. I talked informally with pupils during lunch time and in lessons about their learning. I met with a parent of two children at the school.

Context

The finishing touches to a major programme of building work were being completed during the visit. This provides five additional classes, a music room, and a new entrance area. The school is changing from one-form to two-form entry and in September will have two classes in each of Nursery, Reception and Years 1 and 2, and one class for each year group in Key Stage 2. Six teachers will join the school in September. While some of these appointments arose through staff leaving to take up new posts or retiring, others relate to the school's expansion and the planned restructuring of senior leadership roles to include new posts of phase leaders.

Main findings

Because the school is at a transitional point in staffing, it has adopted a sensible approach to work to improve the quality of teaching. Challenge for weaker practice has been prioritised through the setting of targets and regular review. Successful action has improved the consistency with which pupils respond to teachers' marking of their work using 'think pink' and 'go green'. At present, follow-up to pupils' responses is not recorded and occasional further errors are uncorrected. Results from the 2014 National Curriculum assessments show improvements in pupils' writing. The work scrutiny showed pupils have increased opportunities for writing at length and for different purposes but teachers' expectations of pupils' writing in other subjects do not match those in English lessons.

Leadership and management systems have improved. The senior leadership team meets weekly and phase teams fortnightly, rather than half termly, setting the scene for better driving of improvement. Monitoring of teaching has been stepped up. Some subject leaders have conducted lesson observations, work scrutiny and interviews of groups of pupils, and provided helpful, subject-specific feedback to their colleagues. Not all subject leaders have completed such a range of activities or show the same level of insight into teaching and the curriculum for their subject. Subject leaders have carried out audits that compare the requirements of the new and previous National Curricula and have passed on relevant information to teachers. In mathematics, however, the school is not well prepared for the introduction of the new National Curriculum. Although the audit identified topics that are new or to be taught earlier, no guidance for staff has been provided on teaching approaches and resources to support the development of pupils' understanding of concepts or their ability to reason mathematically and solve problems. The school's calculation policy needs updating with an emphasis on progression towards efficient methods.

Together with the deputy headteacher, you manage teachers' performance. Sensibly, you have adjusted the performance management cycle to coincide with the arrival of the six new teachers. However, the actions planned for January 2015 to tackle any teaching that is less than good are not soon enough. A top priority for the first half of

next term is to establish how good teaching is in each class, initially in English and mathematics, and identify precisely what each teacher needs to do to improve, paying particular attention to subject-specific aspects.

The school's action plan covers the three areas of improvement: the quality of teaching; pupils' progress in writing; leadership and management, particularly subject leadership and governance. The actions and intended impact are defined very broadly. Your proposal to devise supplementary focused short-term plans with clearly specified actions is sensible. These should be monitored and evaluated with an eagle eye for detail, reported to governors, and the outcomes used to refine subsequent actions.

A review of governance took place in June but no report or informal feedback has yet been received. Plans to restructure the governing body have been delayed until next term. Governors spoke of their shock that the inspection last April identified that the school requires improvement. It is crucial that governors develop a much stronger grasp of the effectiveness of the school's day-to-day work and the impact of actions taken on the journey back to good again. The headteacher's termly report provides governors with a large amount of information – too much really, so that they have not always seen the wood for the trees. The key priority for reporting to governors must be the impact of actions taken to drive improvement. Governors' role should include constructive challenge for senior and subject leaders to convince themselves that improvement is real, and to support the school in finding ways to overcome any barriers that get in the way of improvement. Governors have set up a monitoring committee which had its first meeting last week. It would be sensible to align the school's evaluation of the short-term improvement plans with these meetings.

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 school is drawing well on the external support provided through the local authority, for instance in strategic planning and on governance, although it would have been helpful to have received the report following the external review of governance this term. The new phase leaders (including one who has yet to take up the post) have received middle leader training and most subject leaders attended courses about the new National Curriculum. Next term a specialist leader of education will support the school's work in mathematics, although the timescales for the planned work might need to be reviewed to bring more rapid improvement, and support the implementation of the new National Curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Stockport and as below.

Yours sincerely

Jane Jones

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
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk] - for academies, free schools, UTCs and studio schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school is a non-maintained special school [hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk]