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Mrs Jose Hodgkins
Headteacher
Petteril Bank School
Burnett Road
Carlisle
Cumbria CA1 3BX

Dear Mrs Hodgkins

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Petteril Bank School, Cumbria

Following my visit to your school on 1 October 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- conduct a review of governance and enhance governors' role in monitoring and evaluation
- make sure teachers' marking gives specific guidance to extend pupils' knowledge and skills or tackle misunderstandings.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, two members of the governing body, including the Chair, and a local authority representative, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I toured the school at the start of the day and visited each class during lessons. I met with a group of pupils and talked to others as they were working. The school improvement

plans and procedures to monitor performance were evaluated and I looked at a sample of pupils' work with you.

Context

Since the last inspection, teachers have moved year groups in order to make the most of their expertise. An additional Year 6 class has been created, so all classes are now single age.

Main findings

The post-Ofsted action plan addresses fully all the areas identified as requiring improvement. It is well written with clear actions, success criteria and monitoring arrangements. Actions to enhance governors' role in evaluating the impact of pupil premium are clear; however, their role in monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school as a whole is less well-defined. To this end it would be helpful to complete a full review of governance and identify the actions they will take to review the impact of their work and contribute to self-evaluation.

You are tackling the areas for improvement relating to teaching robustly. The individual action plans for teachers are helpful; they link whole school priorities, personal targets and professional development effectively. The arrangements for internal and external moderation of pupils' work is ensuring teachers have an accurate view of the progress pupils' are making. Pupils enjoy 'topic' work and their books show that teachers are mindful of opportunities to extend writing and mathematical skills. Targets are set appropriately taking account of ability and prior learning and based on national curriculum age-related expectations.

Each class has an inviting reading area and pupils are taking their books home every day. Pupils who spoke with me talked enthusiastically about their favourite authors and books. They like the fact that their parents can come in to help them change their books at the start of the day.

Improvements made prior to the last inspection had a positive impact of pupils' achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. Achievement rose in 2014 and the upward trend is continuing, providing a firm foundation on which to raise achievement at Key Stage 2. However achievement in the Key Stage 2 reading and mathematics tests fell in 2014, to below floor targets. There were several factors influencing this, including significant changes to the cohort and an unusually high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Nevertheless, the results were not fully expected, especially in mathematics. We agreed that it would be helpful to carry out a full analysis of past papers to identify whether there are gaps in teaching or issues with pupils' test techniques.

Pupils' work and progress tracking show that pupils are making faster progress in each year group. Work is planned well to take account of pupils' prior learning.

Teachers recognise the need to move pupils on to new learning even faster in order to make up ground from starting points that are well below expectations for their age. Teachers spend a long time marking work but guidance is not always precise enough to take learning forward or correct misunderstandings.

You have already conducted pupil progress meetings to review the progress of pupils in Year 5 and Year 6. The individual action plans for each child in these year groups provide detailed and challenging learning targets with appropriate additional support where needed. There are suitable plans to extend the progress meetings to other year groups.

You have taken swift action to review the behaviour policy and conduct health and safety checks with support from the local authority. I observed pupils entering the school in a calm, orderly and safe way. They were attentive and well behaved in lessons. Pupils who spoke with me said they feel safe and enjoy learning because they do interesting things. They really enjoy the themed weeks and additional clubs.

It is clear that morale was low after the last inspection. However, you have not wasted time in making further changes and staff are determined to make sure the school is judged good at the next inspection. Staff training is relevant with an appropriate focus on building capacity in the senior leadership team.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. We agreed that a support visit would be helpful in March 2015, at which point I will meet with the full Governing Body and conduct a full work scrutiny with staff.

External support

The school is drawing upon external support effectively. Your partnership work with the Carlisle South Primary Alliance provides good opportunities for joint staff training and sharing practice and opportunities for school to school support. The local authority general adviser provides good support and challenge through frequent visits. The establishment of regular Strategic Improvement Meetings with the local authority ensures support plans are on track and provides external validation of the progress being made.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law
Her Majesty's Inspector