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Mrs Amanda Nuttall
Acting Headteacher
Harpur Hill Primary School
Trent Avenue
Harpur Hill
Buxton
SK17 9LP

Dear Mrs Nuttall

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Harpur Hill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 January 2015, 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 October 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:

- implement a rigorous system of performance management which holds those people responsible to account for agreed actions

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, with other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I observed lessons with the acting headteacher, spoke with a group of pupils and looked at work in pupils' books.

Context

Since the last inspection the headteacher has had a period of absence from the school and the deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher since November 2014. The local authority arranged for a headteacher from a neighbouring primary school to support the leadership team for two days a week from the January 2015. The major building work at the school is nearing completion.

Main findings

You, and your senior leaders and governors have worked hard to provide the school with a clear sense of direction and have ensured that the absence of the headteacher has not detracted from the focus of making essential improvements in the school. As a result, the areas identified at the time of the last inspection, are beginning to be addressed.

The new school development plan identifies the key actions needed to bring about the required improvements in the school. However, the actions lack precision and it is not clear enough about when specific actions will be completed. It is not linked closely enough to the school's cycle for assessment and monitoring to ensure that all teachers are clear about what is expected of them.

You have revised the school's marking policy and introduced a new reading policy. You have ensured that all staff have been involved in the development of these policies and there is evidence that there is already a greater degree of consistency in better quality marking. Pupils talked to me about the new marking code and said that the key reminders that are now on display are helping them to remember how teachers expect them to present their work. Pupils clearly feel that more is being expected of them and are enjoying a greater sense of challenge.

The new intervention groups for reading are already having a positive impact on helping pupils at all levels of ability, to make faster progress. Pupils say how much they like these groups and the school's own data show that pupils are achieving higher levels of skill and fluency in reading than before.

Since the last inspection, the early years leader has become established in her role and is starting to bring about improvements to the quality of teaching and learning in this part of the school. As a result, children's involvement and concentration in mathematical and writing activities is increasing. A new recording system to track children's achievement is now in place. However, the system is insufficiently developed because leaders and members of the team are not clear about what individual children need to learn next.

The Chair of the Governing Body has quickly become established and is leading the governing body with insight and skill. Governors now have a clear view of what the school needs to do next. They are not afraid to challenge leaders and to hold them

to account. The governing body has made decisions about the specific curriculum and leadership responsibilities for individual governors but these roles are not yet embedded.

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 provided effective support to the school since the last inspection. For example, an early years consultant has supported the early years leader to review the organisation of teaching and learning in the Reception classes. The local authority has also brokered the support of a headteacher from another school to work in partnership with the acting headteacher. The local authority's on-going work with governors is helping to ensure that the pace of improvement in school is rapid and that the new culture of increased accountability is sustained.

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

Yours sincerely

Clare Cossor

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