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Mrs Rachel Kemp
Headteacher
West Vale Primary School
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Dear Mrs Kemp

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to West Vale Primary School, Calderdale

Following my visit to your school on 25 June 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 March 2015. 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:

- ensure reports and evidence from monitoring activities are evaluative and focus on the impact leaders are having
- ensure tasks in the development plan make clear how outcomes are to be achieved and how improvement will be measured.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher, three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and two middle leaders to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also held a telephone

conversation with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan. You accompanied me on a tour of the school and we visited classrooms to look at pupils' learning during which a selection of pupils' work was scrutinised. I looked at a range of documents, including records of the school's monitoring activities, documents relating to pupils' current levels of attainment and minutes of governing body meetings.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have agreed a new cycle of planning and evaluation. The improvement plan for the summer term ensured leaders began to address the weaknesses identified in the inspection. Senior leaders have begun to take rigorous action to address the weakest teaching. Nevertheless, leaders and governors accepted they need to improve the sharpness of the plan further to focus more on the impact of the actions taken. With support from training they have attended they have begun to draft a new plan for the next academic year.

Middle leaders are beginning to play a fuller part in monitoring the work of the school. They have had coaching from the headteacher and the local authority officer to develop their skills in checking pupils' work, scrutinising teachers' planning and drafting action plans for the subjects they lead. However, this work is at an early stage. The reports of leaders at all levels do not evaluate the impact their work is having or the effectiveness of teaching and learning across the school. Leaders accept that this is because they need to delve more deeply into the difference teaching is making to pupils' progress.

The school has introduced a new scheme to support pupils' spelling and staff have received training in developing pupils' spelling skills. However, work in pupils' books shows there is more to do to ensure pupils have opportunities to apply their spelling skills to their writing and check the spelling of simple words for themselves.

Staff have worked with an external consultant to review the marking of pupils' work and are devising a system to help them check on what pupils' need to do to improve. Pupils' work shows there is still much variation in teachers' ability to set work at the correct level and make sure their marking and feedback addresses errors in pupils' understanding.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Training and support from external consultants have helped to develop the school's approach to spelling. Similarly, more recent work with consultants has enabled leaders to develop a strategy for marking and feedback which will be introduced in

the autumn term. Working alongside the local authority officer has enabled middle leaders to play a greater role in checking the work of the school but this is at an early stage of development.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy
Her Majesty's Inspector