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Mr Andrew Taylor
Acting Headteacher
Christ Church Pellon CofE Primary School
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Dear Mr Taylor

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Christ Church Pellon CofE Primary School, Calderdale

Following my visit to your school on 20 October 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 2015. 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:

- Ensure that governors sharpen the accountability of subject leaders to:
 - make sure that action plans and checks on the quality of teaching focus on the difference leaders are making
 - maintain a focus on less able and disadvantaged pupils so they do not fall behind.

- Develop teachers' and subject leaders' subject expertise in mathematics to ensure that:
 - pupils have opportunities to develop their problem-solving and mathematical reasoning through activities that help them to think deeply for themselves
 - teachers spot misconceptions in pupils' understanding and set work that carefully builds and secures their grasp of mathematical concepts.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with you and four subject leaders. I also held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plans were evaluated together with evidence of pupils' progress and attainment. We looked at pupils' work in mathematics and made visits to classrooms.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection the substantive headteacher has begun a period of maternity leave and you have taken on the acting headship of the school from October 2015. Two teachers left at the end of the summer term. Two new teachers, one of whom is a newly qualified teacher, started at the school in September 2015.

Main findings

Results from the end-of-Key-Stage-2 assessments in 2015 confirm the continuing trend of improvement in the school. The proportion of pupils who left Year 6 having reached expected levels was similar to the national average as was the proportion of most-able pupils who reached higher levels in mathematics and writing. The proportion of pupils in Key Stage 1 achieving expected levels was lower than the national average.

Governors and leaders agree that the judgement of 'requires improvement' at the last inspection was the correct one. The substantive headteacher, governors and the local authority have moved swiftly to secure the leadership of the acting headteacher to continue the drive to move the school forward during the maternity leave of the headteacher. The acting headteacher has settled in quickly, which has meant that none of the enthusiasm and commitment to continued improvement has been lost. The acting headteacher has quickly grasped the strengths and weaknesses within the school and has provided useful support and challenge to teachers to focus subject leaders' attention on the key priorities for pupils' progress.

Governors are linked to different classes and visit the school to undertake learning walks to gather first-hand evidence of the school's work. The Chair of the Governing Body accepts that the measures by which they hold leaders to account, as set out in the school's improvement plan, need to be sharpened to ensure there is a tighter focus on the difference leaders are making. Overall, the school's improvement plans

set out appropriate actions to address the areas for improvement identified in the April inspection. However, targets for less able pupils and those who are disadvantaged are not as ambitious as they are for other pupils. Leaders and governors accept that these need to be reviewed to ensure that these pupils do not fall behind while the school focuses on challenging the most-able pupils.

Subject leaders have received coaching from a specialist leader in education who has supported them in a range of activities to plan improvements and check on the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Leaders have set about these checks diligently. However, some of these checks do not delve deeply enough into the impact leaders' actions are having on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. For example, in mathematics leaders have checked pupils' work for the quality of presentation and to ensure that the marking and feedback policy is being followed. However, scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics books showed that there is further to go to ensure strong subject expertise underpins the planning of activities which challenge pupils to reason mathematically, solve and investigate problems, and builds their understanding of mathematical concepts securely. While teachers conscientiously mark pupils' work, they do not always spot misconceptions in their understanding or set tasks that enable pupils to think deeply for themselves.

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 brokered the support of a specialist leader in education as part of the school's work within the North Halifax cluster of schools. This has enabled subject leaders, some of whom are new to their roles, to check on the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas.

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