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27 October 2015

Mrs S Atwal  
Headteacher  
Alvaston Infant and Nursery School  
Elvaston Lane  
Alvaston  
Derby  
DE24 0PU

Dear Mrs Atwal

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Alvaston Infant and Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 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.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, two subject leaders, three representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I was not able to speak to any children because my visit coincided with a staff training (INSET) day. I evaluated your plans for improvement. I considered documentation relating to the monitoring of teaching and reviewed your most recent data on pupils' progress and attainment. We conducted a tour of the school together and I scrutinised a sample of pupils' work.

#### **Context**

Since the recent inspection, the school has undergone a staffing restructure. This has significantly reduced the number of teaching assistants working at the school.

Three new teachers, including one newly qualified teacher, took up their posts in September.

### **Main findings**

You are urgently addressing the areas identified for improvement at the recent section 5 inspection. You are communicating clearly to all staff the rapid pace of change that is needed and are fully committed to bringing it about. The school action plan is sound and links directly to the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. It identifies the actions leaders must take in order to raise pupils' achievement with clear, measurable success criteria and termly milestones against which progress can be measured.

Teachers are developing a better understanding of what good practice looks like and appreciate the opportunities to observe and share the good practice already recognised within the school, as well as through visiting other schools. All staff, including teaching assistants, have received tailored training and support to develop their confidence and skills in teaching phonics. There is a structured approach to the teaching of phonics and, as a result, the school's most recent assessment information shows that children are making more rapid progress. Parents appreciate the sharper focus placed on the home/school reading diaries, as well as the parent workshop sessions, which are helping them to support their children better with reading at home.

A new behaviour policy is in place. The most recent monitoring records indicate that pupils' attitudes towards their work are improving because it is better matched to their abilities and, consequently, learning is becoming more enjoyable. In those workbooks that I had the opportunity to scrutinise, there is clear evidence that work is marked regularly and that pupils have regular opportunities to review and correct it. There is already some good practice in place but this is not consistent in all classes. Pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work is improving and demonstrates that pupils are taking a greater pride in their work. These improvements reflect the higher expectations now being set by most teachers.

Staff in the early years are developing improved systems for assessment. These include gathering information about children in a variety of ways across all areas of learning through effective use of the new photo assessment boards. This is helping staff to develop an accurate picture of children's skills and plan their learning more precisely to ensure that they make more rapid progress.

The introduction of a new attendance policy is supporting you in working with parents to improve attendance. You are rigorously tackling first-day absence with immediate telephone contact. The weekly celebration of good attendance in assembly is motivating pupils to attend regularly as classes compete to be the best each week. Attendance figures for this term are already showing improvement.

The governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The new termly governor newsletter is effectively supporting improved communication with parents. Governors have a good range of experience and expertise and hold you to account with rigour and confidence.

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 is providing well-targeted support to the school. Senior officers are involved in regular visits; through these, senior leaders and governors are challenged and supported effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**