

18 October 2016

Kathryn Leach
Head of School
Derby St Chad's CofE (VC) Nursery and Infant School
Gordon Road
Derby
DE23 6WR

Dear Ms Leach

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Derby St Chad's CofE (VC) Nursery and Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 5 October 2017, 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 January 2017. 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 in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the quality of the school improvement plan by identifying who will be responsible for evaluating the impact of each action and how they will do this.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the executive headteacher and the leaders for English, mathematics and the early years. I met with the chair of the governing body, a group of pupils from Year 2 and a representative of the local authority. I considered a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, the single central record of employment checks and your most

recent information on pupils' progress and attainment. We conducted a tour of the school together and visited all classes to see pupils and staff at work. I spoke with several parents at the beginning of the school day.

Context

Since the inspection in January 2017, two teachers have left the school and two newly qualified teachers have joined it. You were appointed as head of school in September 2017.

Main findings

Following the last inspection, senior leaders wasted no time in tackling the areas identified for improvement. They were supported in this by the governing body. Since joining the school in September 2017, you have communicated clearly to all staff the rapid pace of change that is needed. You are fully committed to bringing this change about. Staff agree that you are injecting a renewed drive and energy into the school. As a result, staff morale is high. You are building a strong community ethos. Together, you and the other staff expect to realise the school's vision to nurture 'happy, successful and confident pupils who love learning'.

The school's improvement plan is sharply focused on those areas identified at the previous inspection. It is providing you and other senior leaders with a clear strategic overview about what actions are needed to bring about change. This has been the key to ensuring that improvements are taking place at a swift pace. We agreed that the plan, however, is not sharp enough. It does not make it clear enough who will be responsible for checking the impact of each action taken and how they will do this.

You and other senior leaders are working effectively with all staff to raise your expectations of what pupils should achieve. Higher expectations of the quality of teaching are evident. Teachers in all classes now provide daily opportunities for pupils to solve mathematical problems. Pupils cannot wait to wear their 'prove it' glasses when explaining their reasoning. Mathematics working walls display weekly 'tricky problems', linked to pupils' learning. Pupils are encouraged to 'have a go' throughout the week as they learn and develop their knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils are now making more rapid progress in mathematics. They are developing their skills of reasoning and problem solving steadily.

The early years leader is providing a strong lead to other staff. She has an excellent knowledge of the early years. She is leading the team effectively to deliver a curriculum that is specific to the needs of each individual child. The information staff gather from their constant observations and 'in the moment' assessments helps them to support children in their learning. Parents and carers have many opportunities to become involved in their children's learning through 'family learning' sessions. Parents appreciate and value these sessions. They are

contributing effectively to children's faster progress.

Throughout the school, there is a strong emphasis on pupils' acquisition of language skills. For example, teaching assistants skilfully lead daily group sessions such as 'Talk Boost' and 'Word Aware'. These provide children with targeted teaching to reinforce language skills. Staff confidently describe, question and give children time to think and respond. They look for every opportunity to model language and introduce new vocabulary. This means that children are making rapid progress in their communication and language skills.

The English and mathematics subject leaders are enthusiastic. They have embraced the higher expectations set by senior leaders. They have a clear view about the strengths in their subjects and what needs to be done next to drive up standards. Consequently, the pace of improvement throughout the school is accelerating.

Governors have benefited from a range of useful training from senior leaders and the local authority. They have begun to make more focused visits to school. They work alongside leaders to help them gain a fuller understanding of the improvements that are being made. For example, subject leaders attend governors' meetings to provide additional information about their subject. Governors check to see what difference the improvements are making to how well pupils achieve. Governors understand the governing body's role in holding leaders to account as well as supporting leaders in the work they do.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements. Pupils I spoke with told me they felt happy and safe in school. Pupils trust all adults to listen to and deal with any worries or concerns.

The behaviour of the pupils seen was consistently good. In every lesson we visited, pupils had positive attitudes to learning and they were engaged in their work. You are working sensitively, but nonetheless rigorously, with parents to improve attendance. As a result, attendance figures are showing improvement.

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's link adviser knows the school well. She visits the school regularly to review progress. She provides support and challenge to senior leaders on the effectiveness of their leadership. She recognises that, increasingly, the school is showing the capacity to drive its own school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Derby, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derby. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector