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18 March 2014

Mr Scott McFarlane  
Headteacher  
Stokesley Community Primary School  
No 5 Springfield  
Stokesley  
Middlesbrough  
North Yorkshire  
TS9 5EW

Dear Mr McFarlane

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stokesley Community Primary School, North Yorkshire**

Following my visit to your school on 17 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 December 2013. 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 that greater focus is given to the learning and progress pupils are making over time when evaluating the quality and impact of teaching
- work with the local authority to ensure an accurate assessment of pupils' writing.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I undertook a tour of the school, speaking informally with teachers and pupils, and reviewed a range of documentation including the recent checks made on teaching.

### **Context**

A long-term supply teacher continues to cover for the absence of an Early Years Foundation Stage teacher. A new literacy leader has recently been appointed to commence after Easter.

## **Main findings**

Your leadership motto of 'work hard, be smart, no excuses' aptly summarises the approach to improvement that has been adopted in response to the December inspection. Everyone is clearly working hard to bring about the changes needed to ensure the school is good or better within the next 18-24 months. This is because staff share your vision of what all pupils can achieve through a better quality of teaching and they are keen to improve their practice. Your swift response to their individual training needs is already leading to improvements in pupil progress as individual teachers receive both shared and bespoke opportunities to move their own skills further forward for the benefit of their pupils. When this is coupled with the stronger systems now in place to hold teachers more robustly to account, staff are left in no doubt as to what you expect them to achieve with their pupils each term; all are rising to your increased level of challenge as a result.

To date, you have analysed pupil progress information, scrutinised the learning and progress evident in pupils' books and observed a 'snapshot' of lessons to check on the quality of teaching. However, these pieces of evidence have not been cross-referenced; priority being given to one-off lessons rather than what you know about the quality and impact of teaching over time. As you rightly recognise, more frequent checks on teaching that encompass a range of evidence, such as the work in pupils' books, will give a more accurate view of how far teaching has improved. This will also reinforce with teachers that it is about how they typically perform from day-to-day rather than what they manage to demonstrate in a planned, one-off lesson that is of most importance.

Pupils have responded well to the increased opportunities to write for a range of reasons, including across subjects. This is particularly evident in the many examples of high-quality writing on display. However, current assessments of writing are not a true testament to the quality of pupils' work because teachers are overly cautious when awarding their judgements. This presents a false picture of exactly how far the teaching of writing has improved recently and risks demotivating both staff and pupils alike. Frequent, shared moderation of writing across the school, supported by the local authority, would ensure that pupils are more accurately rewarded for what they have achieved.

Governors have appreciated the summarised information they now receive about the progress of different pupil groups. This has afforded them more time to evaluate what the data is telling them and, as a result, ask more pertinent and searching questions of leaders. This increased rigour is bringing a greater level of challenge to your work and governors are now rightly pursuing equally detailed information about the quality of teaching so that they can cross-reference its impact on how well pupils achieve.

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**

You have made effective links with a number of schools in the Northallerton cluster so that staff can learn from best practice. Partnership working with an outstanding school that works within a similar context in a neighbouring authority has proven particularly beneficial in showing staff exactly what it is possible to achieve, particularly in relation to those pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding. This is supporting an improved quality of teaching.

The local authority has provided subject specialist support within school to identify with greater precision the issues surrounding the teaching of English and mathematics. Effective support has also been provided for the Early Years Foundation Stage, where there are higher proportions of temporary staff due to continued absence.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Owston

**Her Majesty's Inspector**