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1 April 2014

Mrs Debra Rankine  
Headteacher  
Swarcliffe Primary School and Nursery  
Swarcliffe Drive  
Leeds  
West Yorkshire  
LS14 5JW

Dear Mrs Rankine

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Swarcliffe Primary School and Nursery, Leeds**

Following my visit to your school on 31 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 November 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 the school improvement plan includes clear and measurable targets about the proportions of pupils making better than expected progress across the school, against which success can be judged over-time
- ensure a relentless focus on improving the language and communication skills of pupils and that this is reflected in the school improvement plan
- develop the role of external partners in sharing best practice and securing the judgements the school makes about itself.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, a group of pupils, middle leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated a range of documentation including: the school improvement plan; data tracking pupils' progress; monitoring reports and records of lesson observations. In addition we undertook a

tour of the school to look briefly at teaching and learning and the changes made to provision since the inspection.

## **Main findings**

You and your senior leaders are resolute in your conviction to improve the school so that it is judged to be good or better when it is next inspected. You have responded positively to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection, working with urgency to lay the foundations for improvements in the consistency and quality of teaching and learning across the school, particularly in mathematics. Actions taken include:

- developing the role of support staff so they are better able to support the needs of all learners
- making sure teachers use assessment information on what pupils can already do more effectively, to plan appropriate and challenging activities
- developing the role of middle leaders so that they understand they are accountable for their own areas of responsibility
- ensuring that pupils are more aware of their targets and the levels they have achieved. However, pupils are not yet confident in expressing the next steps they need to take to improve their learning.

Actions to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills have focussed on securing accurate teacher assessments. Future plans to promote speaking and listening and language development across the school are not yet clear. You recognise this is now a priority.

Systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning have been tightened. There are regular reviews of how well pupils are achieving and increasingly staff are held to account for the progress their pupils are making. Recent reviews carried out across the school show that these actions are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Challenge and support is being provided where teachers' performance needs further improvement. Improvements in pupils' mathematical understanding, especially the most able, is increasingly evident in their books.

The school improvement plan addresses the areas identified in the recent inspection and has rightly prioritised actions linked to improving teaching and learning. It gives a clear picture of proposed actions. Milestones and success criteria are in place but do not have a sufficient focus on the most able pupils or those that can make better than expected progress. This makes it difficult for governors to pinpoint with accuracy how well the school is improving over time.

Governors have held meetings to agree the school action plan and they are knowledgeable about the actions being undertaken by you and your staff. They are keen to be more effective in their work and since the inspection they have undertaken a number of training activities, including a whole governing body session on effective governance and individual governors have accessed specific training events according to need.

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 supported you in evaluating the impact of recent actions and identifying where further refinement is needed to maximise the difference new initiatives are making to the quality of teaching and learning. However, links with other schools have been slow to develop. The local authority, as a matter of urgency, should work with you to set-up links with good and outstanding local schools so that you and your governors can share best practice and secure judgements about how well the school is progressing.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Leeds and as below.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown

## **Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority - including where the school is an academy
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation