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13 June 2014

Mrs Kathryn Melling  
Headteacher  
Leyland Methodist Junior School  
Canberra Road  
Leyland  
Lancashire  
PR25 3ET

Dear Mrs Melling

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leyland Methodist Junior School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 2014, 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 October 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:

- improve the quality of teaching by establishing links with other good and outstanding schools so that teachers and, as a consequence their pupils, benefit from observing good practice elsewhere
- Improve the quality of pupils' writing by using effectively the local and wider environment to add interest and relevance to their work.

### **Evidence**

During my visit, I held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers, pupils, a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body to

discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan, along with a range of other documentation provided by the school, was evaluated. I took the opportunity to tour the school to observe learning and looked at pupils' work in their classrooms and in a sample of their work books. I read minutes of governing body meetings.

## **Context**

Since the inspection staff changes have been reduced significantly. One teacher, previously employed on a temporary basis, has been appointed on a permanent contract. A new teacher, with responsibility for teaching and learning, was appointed to a permanent position in April 2014. These roles have replaced staff who have not returned to school following long-term absence.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher, with the support of other leaders and governors, has ensured that improving the quality of teaching is the number one priority in the drive to raise standards across the school. The school improvement plan is well thought out, gives appropriate actions to address the main areas for improvement and includes specific measures of success which are used by leaders to measure progress accurately.

Regular pupil progress meetings ensure that teachers are held rigorously to account by senior leaders for the extent of progress made by their pupils. Leaders scrutinise pupils' work, observe teaching in lessons and hold discussions with the pupils before making their judgments on the overall effectiveness of teaching. This approach is leading to improvements in the rate of pupils' progress in both reading and mathematics and particularly so in writing. Leaders have used effectively what they have learned about the quality of teaching to tailor the support provided for teachers to improve their teaching.

The school's own data, validated by the local authority, demonstrate improvements in attainment in writing from well below average to average by the end of Year 6. Examples of writing displayed around the school show that boys are encouraged to write more frequently than before and also that they enjoy doing so. An example of this could be seen when boys and girls had been hooked initially by discussing a well-known outdoor adventurer, they then went on to write a detailed and lengthy report relating to a fictional novel. However, leaders accurately identify that the gap between more-able boys and more-able girls in writing remains and still more needs to be done to encourage boys to write as often as possible.

Pupils spoken with said that they enjoy mathematics because of the practical approach to learning used by their teachers. They said they enjoy problem solving because it is 'more real' than looking at a book. Examples in one classroom of pupils' three dimensional models built around spirals, demonstrate that these pupils are able to transfer their learning from mathematics into other areas of the curriculum

with ease. These pupils are making good progress and reaching higher levels of attainment in mathematics. Leaders, rightly, identify that a small minority of teachers need to actively promote a love of learning by giving their pupils more time to investigate interesting mathematical problems for themselves.

Governors, as reported at the previous inspection, continue to be effective in supporting the school to improve. Recent minutes of meetings show that governors leave no stone unturned in order that they have a clear and accurate picture of the rate of progress being made by the school. Governors have used training in the appraisal of teachers provided by the local authority successfully. This has increased governors' understanding of the link between teachers' performance and pupils' progress. Consequently, whole school targets are being set which are effectively raising the expectations of what all pupils can 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**

The journey towards becoming a good school is gathering impetus because leaders are making effective use of the expertise of external partners. For example, governors have increased their understanding of progress data following training given by the local authority. Consequently, governors are even more rigorous in their questioning of leaders about the underperformance of different groups of pupils. Since the inspection, good links with the local authority have been instrumental in the appointment of new staff in preparation for September 2014. Improved links with the local outstanding infant school have resulted in a coherent transition plan designed to ensure no ground is lost as pupils from the infant school become part of the junior school.

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

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw

### **Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools