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Monday 17 May 2010

Mr Ian Bell
St James' Church of England Aided Junior School
Reginald Street
Derby
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Dear Mr Bell

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Friday 14 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and Chair of Governors for their time and courtesy. I would like to particularly thank the pupils for the enjoyable time I spent talking with them.

Since the school's last inspection, the school has been involved in federation arrangements with two local infant schools. The most recent of these took place in January 2010 and necessitated the reconstitution of the governing body, as well as the establishment of an extended leadership team across the federation.

As a result of the inspection on 12-13 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- increase the range of opportunities to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills across the curriculum
- improve the quality of teaching so that it consistently provides pupils with work matched to their learning needs
- develop a rigorous approach to monitoring progress, ensuring that improvements made are consistent across the school.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

My visits to a sample of lessons confirmed that the school's analysis of information on pupils' performance is accurate and shows that overall attainment is improving. Although standards remain low, the data indicates that the proportion of pupils working at age appropriate levels is rising and pupils are beginning to make more rapid progress because teaching is improving. These improvements are as a result of the strenuous efforts made by the school to improve pupils' basic skills.



Satisfactory progress has been made with improving consistency in the quality of teaching. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, more lessons are now of good quality. Teachers consistently manage their classes well and maintain extremely positive relationships with pupils. Behaviour in all lessons visited was exemplary. The classrooms are attractive and effective use is made of working walls. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, but the work set for pupils who learn at different rates is not always matched well enough to what they already know. Too often all pupils have the same task with varying degrees of support rather than work which challenges them, or which teaches them something new or how to approach a task in a different way. Pupils know and understand their personal targets and what they have to do to achieve them. Pupils are proud of their work and keen to show what they can do. Teaching assistants offer good academic guidance.

The school has made good progress in developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. A range of strategies have been introduced and are being used consistently across the school. These include initiatives such as talk for writing, hot seating, and talk partners. When questioning pupils, teachers provide good opportunities for them to provide answers which require the use of whole sentences to improve their language skills. In one good numeracy lesson observed during the visit, pupils demonstrated excellent use of complex mathematical language to describe properties of shapes.

Through the determination of both the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the school is clearly focused on improving learning and achievement. There is a strong focus on tracking pupils' progress over time and targets set for pupils' performance are flexible and challenging. Middle leaders are taking a more strategic view of their areas and show greater understanding of their responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education. The leadership team has accurately evaluated the impact of their monitoring activities and are making appropriate changes to further increase the rigour of the system. The governing body is committed to helping the school secure the necessary improvements, as well as to holding the school to account for the progress pupils make.

The school has worked effectively with the local authority to bring about change. In particular, the work of both literacy and numeracy consultants has had a positive effect on teaching and learning.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Once the school has had 24 hours to report any factual inaccuracies, the post-visit letter is copied as appropriate to the following:

- Appropriate authority - chair of governors/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – except for academies
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
CausingConcern.schools@dcf.gov.uk)
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools

A copy with editing marked up should be forwarded to the:

Lead inspector