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Mrs Tracy Price  
The Headteacher  
James Bateman Junior High School  
Park Lane  
Knypersley  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST8 7AT

Dear Mrs Price

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to James Bateman Junior High School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 on 6 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, the local leader of education, and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan and reviewed a range of documentation including pupils' reading ages, senior leaders' notes of lesson observations and the latest information on pupils' achievement. I also visited some classrooms with you and talked to pupils about their learning.

#### **Context**

One temporary teacher has left the school. Several new appointments to the teaching staff have been made, including a new literacy leader and teachers to deliver the revised Key Stage 2 curriculum that is to be introduced in September 2013. The school has achieved a training quality mark since the last inspection.

#### **Main findings**

You and other school leaders have responded swiftly and effectively to the outcomes of the school's recent inspection. You have written a new school improvement plan which contains suitable actions and is strongly focused on raising pupils' achievement. It does not, however, always clearly indicate who will evaluate the school's work or the roles to be played by the governors and the local leader of education.

A review of the Key Stage 2 curriculum has been carried out with the support of the local leader of education. As a result of this review, you are introducing a primary model of grouping and teaching pupils in Years 5 and 6 in September 2013 meaning that these pupils will have the majority of their lessons with one classroom teacher in the same classroom. They will have access to specialist teaching in some subjects, for example, English, mathematics, science and physical education. Planning for the delivery of this model has been thorough and the senior leaders are confident that this approach will help pupils make the progress expected of them.

Improved lesson planning procedures are now in place which have resulted in teachers ensuring pupils are more engaged and involved in their learning. Teachers are now planning lessons to make sure all pupils are given work that gets the best out of them.

The school has improved its checking of pupil progress through the introduction of the 'Going for Gold' scheme. The scheme enables pupils, and their teachers to see if they are making the progress expected of them. The programme also enables teachers to identify pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning. Meetings to discuss the progress of pupils have been built-in to this scheme and are enabling you and the senior leaders to hold individual teachers to account for how well pupils do.

The training for teachers has been targeted on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The deputy headteacher has worked with individual teachers to provide tailored support which has included how teachers check pupils' progress. This is helping pupils to learn more effectively. The local leader of education has also provided good training on improving the quality of teaching. Middle leaders with responsibility for subjects have also been supported by the local leader of education. This is resulting in more effective leadership across the school.

The marking policy has been revised and re-written. You recognise, however, that the impact of this has yet to be measured.

Reading standards across the school are low. In Year 5, 77 out of 98 pupils have reading ages below their chronological age. In Year 8, 50 out of 96 pupils have reading ages below their chronological age. The improvement of reading, therefore, is a priority for the school.

Attainment and progress remain low at the end of Key Stage 2, especially in English and mathematics.

Governors are starting to have a better understanding of their roles. They have attended the Ofsted 'Getting to Good' seminar, and have had training on the use of external data and on stronger governance from the local authority. The impact of this training is not yet seen in their ability to challenge or support you. Although you and your senior staff show great determination to drive forward improvements, the same drive is not evident in governance.

Senior leaders are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- as a matter of urgency, carry out an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved
- measure the impact of subject leaders in raising standards, especially in English and mathematics. By my next visit, subject leaders should prepare a detailed analysis of pupil progress and attainment in their subject. These reviews should be emailed to me before my visit
- ensure that the school development plan has deadlines to enable you to see whether you are on track and that all actions you plan have measurable outcomes
- ensure that the school development plan clearly identifies how the local leader of education and governors will challenge and support you and other senior leaders to raise standards, especially in reading and mathematics
- ensure that the pupils' progress in reading is monitored and reviewed at half-termly intervals. A full analysis should be available before my next visit.

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 provides an effective level of support and challenge. It has an accurate picture of the school's position and the progress you have made since the last inspection. Suitable training for teachers and school leaders is having a positive impact. The local authority has linked you with a local leader of education in order to help you continue to improve. The local leader of education has provided good support which is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely  
Peter Humphries

**Her Majesty's Inspector**