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24 November 2011

Ms Dunford
Headteacher
Barnes Voluntary Primary School
Queen Street
Newton Abbot
TQ12 2AU

Dear Ms Dunford

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Barnes Voluntary Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 23 November 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 3 and 4 March 2011, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. On 1 September 2011, following the necessary period of consultation the school successfully federated with another local primary school.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The headteacher has taken decisive actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school in order to raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. Aably supported by senior leaders she has effectively begun to tackle each area for improvement that was identified at the time of the previous inspection. A comprehensive system of monitoring pupils' progress has been introduced. This is being used to carefully track each pupil's progress as they acquire and develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, a large majority of pupils are now making good and accelerated progress, relative to their low starting points. In turn, this information is regularly presented by the headteacher to the governing body. This good communication ensures that the governing body can hold the school to account and influence the strategic direction of the school to best effect.

More pupils are experiencing good quality teaching and learning experiences because monitoring information is now being used by teachers to plan lessons that better provide for the needs of individual pupils. The close tracking of pupils'

progress helps teachers to provide more effectively for the learning needs of each pupil. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their work and setting personal targets to improve are at an early stage of implementation within the school.

Although test results for 2011 show positive improvements, attainment remains well below the national average, particularly by the end of Key Stage 2. This is because a legacy of underachievement remains within the school. However, the school is working steadily to lift pupils' attainment, particularly in writing and in the use and application of mathematics. As a result, pupils are experiencing increased opportunities to use and apply their basic skills throughout the curriculum. For example, in one class visited pupils had good opportunities to talk in small groups or pairs and read a variety of texts before practising writing sentences to capture the reader's interest. Similarly, younger children used the outdoor learning area effectively to hunt for letter sounds in helping them to build and read new words. Taking account of many pupils' low starting points the school is now in a stronger position to help an increasing proportion of pupils make the good and accelerated progress necessary if they are to successfully close the gaps in their learning.

Teachers have benefited from additional specialist support and training, provided by the local authority and other partners, to improve pupils' core skills. This in turn has helped to strengthen pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have started to make significant improvements to the development of the curriculum and use a variety of good resources to support pupils in making good progress in lessons. Pupils also say they enjoy coming to school and appreciate the efforts teachers go to to making lessons enjoyable.

The school has been very successful in its work to change the culture of low attendance that, historically, has been well below the national average in recent years. It is working closely with parents and carers to provide opportunities for them to become more involved in their children's learning. For example, a recently formed breakfast club is proving to be popular with parents and carers as well as pupils. Attendance is vigorously monitored and as a result, rates are now above the national average. The school ensures adults are appropriately trained and kept up to date in safeguarding pupils and is vigilant in the way that records are kept.

The local authority has provided timely support in the provision of specialist support and training for teachers to help them to develop pupils' basic skills. It also provides good support to senior leaders in setting the strategic development of the school, all of which is closely monitored through the school's statement of action. The headteacher has demonstrated well-placed skill and determination in successfully federating with another local school at the start of this academic year. Plans are well advanced to continue this process early in 2012 with a third local primary school.

Middle leaders speak confidently about the changes and positive work that has gone on since the previous inspection, particularly in developing pupils' attitudes to learning and improvements to the curriculum that give them more opportunities to

investigate, problem solve and make decisions about their work. However, there is still work to be done especially in strengthening pupils' attitudes to learning.

Governors possess an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development and exercise confidence in setting the strategic direction of the school. Consequently, they hold leaders effectively to account which is further evidence of the school's good capacity to improve further.

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

Yours sincerely

David Edwards

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2011

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least average by:
 - involving Key Stage 2 pupils in their own learning by giving them more opportunities to discuss together in lessons and evaluate their own and each other's work
 - extending the many stimulating writing activities from Years 5 and 6 lessons at an appropriate level to Years 3 and 4
 - teaching number in Key Stage 2 in the context of measuring, shape and space, data handling and real-life problems.

- Improve pupils' ability to apply basic skills by:
 - devising topics in the curriculum for Key Stage 2 that offer clear opportunities for pupils to use their skills across subjects
 - planning individual lessons so that skills are not taught in isolation, but are given a purpose and a use, either in that lesson or as the outcome of a series of lessons.

- Improve attendance so that it is at least broadly average by:
 - rigorously pursuing existing strategies and evaluating their effectiveness before the end of the current school year
 - giving parents and carers of pupils whose attendance is not high enough opportunities to come into school and become more involved in their children's learning
 - making school more motivating for pupils by giving them more opportunities to investigate, problem solve and make decisions about their work.