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11 May 2012

Mrs K Mould
Buckland Primary School
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Dear Mrs Mould

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Buckland Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 May 2012, for the time you gave to our phone discussion, and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection, and for your engagement in joint lesson observations. Discussions with pupils, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority were also very helpful in evaluating the progress the school has made. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave and for the welcome I received.

There have been no significant contextual changes since the October 2011 inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 19 October 2011, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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

Pupils' attainment and progress are improving. The majority of pupils are on track to attain above national averages in reading and their progress is at least good. In most year groups, progress in mathematics is improving, although in a minority of classes, progress is still too slow. Leaders have acted quickly to ensure that pupils currently in Year 6 leave the school with the necessary key skills for their next stage of education. These pupils are on track to achieve results above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's own tracking data indicate that progress in writing remains variable, but evidence from lessons and pupils' books indicates that writing has recently improved. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making progress broadly in line with their peers. Some of these pupils who have benefited from effective individual support are making accelerated

progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are generally making slower progress than their peers. Their progress is discussed in regular pupil review meetings when teachers are held to account for pupils' progress. Strategies to support better progress are identified and beginning to have a positive impact.

Teaching is improving as a result of clearer expectations for teachers linked to appropriate training. Where the school has acted to improve aspects of teaching including expectations of planning for the various needs in the class, there are clear improvements, although not entirely consistently. Teachers now routinely share lesson aims and expectations with pupils, allowing them to assess their own learning effectively.

In the best lessons, teachers carefully and systematically build on prior learning, their questioning probes understanding and challenges pupils to achieve more. The pace of learning is brisk and teachers have high expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Activities match learners' needs and interests. Good learning behaviours are embedded in positive relationships between teachers and pupils. In one Year 2 lesson, pupils were using appropriate mathematical vocabulary to describe the various strategies they were using in attempting to solve one- and two-step number problems. Pupils have more opportunities to develop writing across the curriculum and some subjects are taught within a theme so that pupils can see the links in their learning. For example, older pupils were writing within the theme of a '*Star Wars*' topic successfully chosen to engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm, particularly for the boys. Opportunities to develop mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum are more limited, although pupils describe using these skills in science investigations.

Some teaching, however, is securing no better than satisfactory progress, which means that pupils are not able to quickly fill the gaps in their learning. In weaker lessons, activities do not precisely meet learners' needs. For example, in one lesson, pupils were attempting to solve number problems but did not have the necessary skills or clear strategies to do so. Learning lacks pace when activities waste time, for example in unnecessarily copying out questions. Sometimes, the organisation of the lesson does not lend itself to efficient learning when pupils work in large groups and have insufficient opportunities for active learning.

Most lessons feature ample opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning and ideas with a friend. Pupils typically cooperate and work well with each other. Teachers consistently mark pupils' work, and provide supportive and often helpful feedback. Sometimes, however, this feedback does not target the most crucial areas for improvement and is not sharp enough to ensure that pupils know precisely what they can do to improve. Pupils have targets for literacy and numeracy, and when they are given opportunities, they use them to evaluate their progress and learning in lessons. Some targets, however, do not identify the most important priorities for improvement, for example some literacy targets do not focus sufficiently on improving the structure of writing. Pupils enjoy reading and talk enthusiastically

about their favourite books and authors. There is a growing culture of reading in the school. The school's focus on improving spelling is beginning to be effective, particularly when pupils in Years 3 and 4 are working in small groups to apply their knowledge of the sounds letters make to their spelling. Most classes are stimulating learning environments with interactive displays which support learning, particularly in mathematics and writing.

The monitoring of teaching is regular and accurate. This was confirmed during joint observations with the headteacher. Written feedback to teachers, however, does not always make clear the impact of their teaching on the progress of pupils. Areas to improve are not routinely followed through to the next observation to ensure that matters have improved quickly. Senior leaders who are responsible for monitoring teaching and learning are well placed because they have a clear understanding of what constitutes good progress for pupils and provide models of good practice.

Attendance has improved and is now broadly average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased significantly since the last inspection but still remains too high. The attendance officer, in partnership with the home school link worker, is making a good contribution to improving attendance when working closely with individual families. The school's systems to monitor attendance are secure; however, some procedures to improve attendance are not rigorous enough. Pupils appreciate awards they receive which encourage them to come to school. Parents and carers receive good information about the impact of poor attendance on learning and progress.

Leaders, including governors, are becoming more effective in their role. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body monitors the work of the school rigorously, including through regular meetings to check progress against the school's action plans. Safeguarding procedures are secure. The school records important pre-employment checks diligently.

The local authority provides valuable support outlined in the statement of action which meets requirements. This includes help in improving leadership, teaching and achievement through the use of learning consultants and a leader in education who is the headteacher of a local school. Support to reduce persistent absence is less effective.

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

Michelle Winter

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve progress through ensuring 70% of teaching is good by September 2012 by:
 - Ensuring that teachers use assessment information to accurately plan the next steps in learning and set work which is appropriately challenging for all pupils and reflects their capabilities.
 - Ensuring that all lessons are well paced and that expectations are consistently high.
 - Planning more opportunities to apply pupils' basic skills across different areas of learning.

- Raise attendance to at least the national average by January 2013 by:
 - Ensuring that systems are used rigorously to support pupils who are poor attenders.
 - Strengthening partnerships with external agencies to provide more effective support for pupils who are poor attenders.