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Mr D Payne
Headteacher
Biggin Hill Primary School
Old Tye Avenue
Westerham
TN16 3LY

Dear Mr Payne

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Biggin Hill Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 7 February 2013 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff, members of the governing body, parents and the headteacher of Warren Road Primary School who gave up their time to talk to me.

Since the previous inspection, a new Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors have been appointed and new governors have been recruited to the governing body. Three teachers have left the school and three new teachers have been recruited, including two who started teaching at the school very recently. Another teacher is due to leave the school at the end of term. A number of support staff have been made redundant and will leave the school at the end of the Spring term 2013.

As a result of the inspection on 10 and 11 May 2012, 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.

Since the last inspection, there have been marked improvements in achievement in reading and writing. Pupils' attainment in reading and writing improved significantly in the 2012 National Curriculum Tests and pupils continue to make good progress. The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) is far more consistent, rigorous and effective than before and, as a result, standards in reading are rising quickly. In lessons seen during the visit, all groups of pupils made good progress in building their phonic knowledge, including through whole-class, small-group and one-to-one teaching. Regular monitoring of pupils' progress means they can be moved to a

different group if they find the work too easy or difficult. This more systematic approach to teaching letters and sounds is now being used to help a small number of pupils in Key Stage 2 who need extra help to catch up with their reading.

Pupils in all years have responded positively to the increased focus given to reading throughout the school. The new reading scheme has raised the profile of reading across the school and good systems are in place to help parents support their children's reading. Curriculum changes have also increased the time provided for pupils to learn through guided reading.

Attainment in mathematics rose significantly at the end of Key Stage 1 last year but not at the end of Key Stage 2. Careful analysis of National Curriculum Test papers has provided the subject leader for mathematics with a clear understanding of the areas of teaching which need to improve. As a result, a new calculation policy has recently been introduced to help strengthen mathematics teaching. In addition, the school has recently extended ability setting in mathematics from the juniors into Year 2 so that teaching can be better matched to pupils' needs. However, these recent initiatives have not had time to make any significant impact. The school's latest analysis of pupils' attainment in mathematics shows clear improvement on previous years, although the pace of improvement is not equally strong for all year groups.

Attainment for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is rising rapidly, having been too low last year. While pupils with a statement of special educational needs make good progress, not all disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the progress they should.

The school's revised behaviour policy has proved very effective in improving pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. All pupils and staff I met with during the visit reported these improvements. Most parents agree. In response to the school's questionnaire, completed by 113 parents in October 2012, 87% of parents agreed with the statement, 'Children at Biggin Hill behave well in lessons'. Behaviour seen in lessons during the monitoring inspection was almost always good, and in the junior assembly, all pupils behaved impeccably. Pupils say that they feel safer than before because pupils no longer run in the corridor. Pupils appreciate particularly the work of the play leaders who organise activities at lunchtimes for those who don't want to play football or don't have anyone to play with.

Improved behaviour is also the result of better teaching. The proportion of good teaching has increased and leaders and managers have taken robust action to tackle the weakest teaching. Leaders and managers know that teaching is still not consistently good in mathematics. The improvements made are the result of much more rigorous leadership and management than before, together with teachers' willingness to adapt their practice so that teaching is more consistent across the school.

The headteacher and his team have established clear expectations that set out how teachers should plan lessons and mark work. Rigorous monitoring has ensured that policies have been implemented consistently across the school. For example, good use of target-setting was seen in books in almost all of the lessons observed. As a result, pupils know their mathematics and literacy targets very well and regularly refer to them in lessons. Day-to-day use of subject specific targets has helped improve pupils' ability to work on their own and increased their determination to do their best. Pupils are keen to share their targets with adults and each other and are always checking to see if they are ready for a new target. The quality of marking has also improved significantly. All teachers now employ next-steps – or 'green pen' – marking, which sets pupils additional activities to consolidate or extend their learning. Occasionally, some of the tasks in mathematics are too easy, and do not build enough on what the pupils have learnt in the previous lesson.

Improvements to teachers' planning are helping to ensure that increasingly, the work set matches the needs of all pupils in the class. Lessons routinely include different activities for each ability group and these are usually well matched to pupils' individual targets. However, teachers' use of ongoing assessment to check learning during lessons is less consistent. For example, some mathematics teaching fails to spot pupils' misconceptions quickly enough, with the result that some pupils spend time repeating the same mistakes without being corrected. Extended teacher introductions to lessons are not always effective in accelerating learning. The impact of teaching assistants on pupils' learning remains uneven.

The school's statement of action, produced after the school's last inspection, is fit for purpose and provides good challenge and support for school leaders.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a cohesive team who support and challenge each other well. They are supported by an effective team of middle leaders. All leaders now routinely observe the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. The restructured governing body now meets the needs of the school much more effectively than before and benefits from the recruitment of governors with significant educational experience.

The school has benefitted from very strong support from the Warren Teaching School Alliance. This has included regular support and challenge at governors meetings, support and coaching for senior leaders and opportunities for staff to visit other schools to observe teaching practice.

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

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2012

- By September 2012, improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in accelerating the pace of improvement by:
 - rigorously monitoring and evaluating achievement and teaching to secure greater consistency of good practice
 - involving all key leaders in directly observing the quality of teaching and learning in lessons
 - enabling staff to learn from best practice in other schools.

- By January 2013, improve the quality of teaching and achievement to good, focusing particularly on reading and mathematics, by:
 - implementing effective lesson planning formats that promote good practice, ensuring teaching and tasks closely match the needs of all pupils
 - conducting lessons at a sufficiently brisk pace to lift pupils' achievement
 - embedding consistent and effective systems for setting and reviewing pupils' 'next-step' targets
 - using marking frequently to show pupils how to improve their work
 - increasing the rigour of teaching letters and sounds (phonics).

- Embed robust and consistent systems for analysing and improving pupils' behaviour and communicating these clearly to pupils, staff, parents and carers.