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17 April 2013

Mr Peterson  
Bitterne CE(VC) Junior School  
Brownlow Avenue  
Bitterne  
Southampton  
Hampshire  
SO19 7BX

Dear Mr Peterson

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Bitterne CE(VC) Junior School, Southampton**

Following my visit to your school on 17 April 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 in February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The inspector visited lessons as part of a tour of the school. The school action plan was evaluated. Senior leaders showed the inspector the new and developing lesson planning format, the action plan for the coaching programme and examples of pupils' independent writing.

**Context**

Since the last inspection, the leader for Year 5 has left the school. This has left a teaching vacancy which is currently being covered by a temporary appointment.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher, his senior team and governors have taken swift action to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. The school's action plan is appropriately focused on pupil progress and the quality of teaching. It includes a detailed timescale with challenging milestones to ensure rapid improvement.

Senior leaders and teachers are monitoring pupils' progress more effectively, setting very specific and fine-tuned targets. School records of pupil progress show improvement in line with the milestones in the action plan. Teachers are now more skilled at tracking pupils' achievement using average points scores based on assessments. This ensures that teachers and senior leaders can identify any groups of pupils who are not making enough progress and then take action to ensure they catch up. School leaders have rightly focused on providing intervention programmes in particular areas, including the quality of pupils' writing and the progress of Year 5. Workbooks seen during the monitoring visit showed examples of independent writing and dialogue marking, which clearly showed pupils taking responsibility for their work. Pupils responded in writing to their teachers' comments and improved the quality of their written work.

The school's coaching programme, led by the subject leader for English, has been developed and extended. More teachers are being trained to be coaches and teaching is improving as a result of the regular, direct and practical coaching sessions that happen during lessons.

The school is in the process of developing an improved method for planning lessons and learning, which is based on what teachers want pupils to learn rather than descriptive lists of tasks and activities.

Governors are challenging the school more and have undertaken training in areas that needed further development following the last inspection. They commented on the increased momentum of improvement in the school and the determined and positive attitude of all staff. Senior leaders, governors and the local authority are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- continue to strengthen the ability of senior leaders to improve teaching and learning through rigorous monitoring of teachers' work
- embed the coaching programme to increase teachers' confidence and resilience
- continue to focus on improving pupils' progress in writing.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

## **External support**

Prior to the last inspection the local authority had been supporting the school. The school benefits from a close relationship with a school improvement partner, who visits frequently. A review of teaching took place in March 2013, including a programme of joint lesson observations with the headteacher, senior leaders and governors. HMI recommend that this support continues and develops school leaders' skills in monitoring the work of the school so that improvements in teaching and progress can be sustained long-term. The school draws upon other partnerships and support, including from independent education consultants and the Portswood Teaching Alliance.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Southampton Local Authority and as below.

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The lead inspector.