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12 July 2013

Mr Christopher Ludlow  
Headteacher  
Blakeley Heath Primary School  
Sytch Lane  
Wombourne  
Wolverhampton  
WV5 0JR

Dear Mr Ludlow

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Blakeley Heath Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 11 July 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 in December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, and the headteacher from your partner school, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and a group of pupils. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including information about pupils' achievement, feedback to teachers following lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work and notes from external reviews of the school's performance. During the visit, you joined me on short visits to classes.

### **Context**

Since the inspection one member of staff has resigned and will be leaving at the end of term. One new member of staff has been appointed.

## Main findings

You have established a clear vision for the school. You and your leadership team fully understand the scale of improvement that is required and have responded effectively to the issues raised in the last inspection. You have established a set of accurate information about pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. Your records show that teachers' judgements about pupils' achievement have been carefully moderated and agreed with senior leaders. The local authority has supported this process. This means that you can now accurately check on the different rates of progress the pupils are making in every year group. Teachers are clear about what is expected of them and how they will be held accountable for pupils' achievement. Senior leaders and class teachers meet termly to discuss pupils' progress. This process is working well. However, your current system for collating this information and checking the achievement of different groups of pupils is overly complex. You are aware of the need to collate and present this information more concisely in order to gain a more strategic view of achievement.

You regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' work. You have identified weaknesses in teaching and taken appropriate actions. These actions include the introduction of individual support plans for teachers. You have organised external training programmes for all staff, focused on raising the quality of teaching. You have supplemented this with coaching and mentoring programmes where necessary. Your monitoring file shows that your actions have led to improvements in the quality of teaching. However, your written feedback to teachers is not making full use of the standards set out by the government for teachers. You are aware of the need to confirm your judgements on teaching by using assessment data and pupils' work in order to gain a more detailed picture of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching over time. Current systems for doing this are too complicated because relevant information is held in too many different places.

You have taken actions to improve teachers' marking and feedback to pupils. Your monitoring files show signs of improvement in teachers' marking although this is not yet consistent across the school. Your monitoring of work in pupils' books also shows that the newly introduced system of 'star and a task' is helping pupils to know how to improve their work. Pupils value this. Your records shows an improving picture of pupils' progress overall with more pupils now working closer to national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Your records also show improvements in the achievement of those pupils eligible for pupil premium funding across the school. Your information shows that they are making good progress and there are some signs that the gap between the achievement of these pupils and others in school is beginning to narrow. However, this is not yet consistent across all subjects in all classes.

Your school improvement plan addresses all the key areas and includes suitable actions to improve the quality of teaching and the work of senior leaders. The plan

does have appropriate milestones but there are not enough time-specific, interim success measures to help you to closely plot your progress on the journey to Good.

Governors have responded rapidly to the inspection findings. Minutes of meetings indicate that governors are asking relevant questions about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Named governors are now linked to each year group and plan to closely monitor those classes. However, governors are not confident in evaluating school data on pupils' achievement independently. I recommend that the local authority provides further training for the governing body to strengthen their understanding of information on pupils' achievement so that they can develop their own view of how well pupils are doing.

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

- refine systems used to record and present pupils' achievement
- refine systems for judging the quality of teaching over time and use the Teachers' Standards when feeding back to teachers
- tackle the inconsistencies that continue in the quality of teachers' marking
- include time-specific success measures in the school improvement plan
- organise training and support to help governors to understand information about pupils' achievement.

### **External support**

Through review meetings and regular visits you have received an appropriate level of support and challenge from local authority officers. The local authority has organised a valuable external evaluation of the progress you have made since the section 5 inspection. This has informed your actions. Your partnership with a local headteacher has been effective. It has contributed to the improvement in the quality of teaching and a clearer system of performance management. You have also identified an outstanding school to provide further support for your senior leaders. I recommend that you continue to draw upon this range of external support.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**