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17 July 2014

Mrs Valda McGee  
Headteacher  
Beechwood School  
Meredith Street  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 2PH

Dear Mrs McGee

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Beechwood School, Cheshire East**

Following my visit to your school on 16 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings. 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and an officer of the local authority, in order to discuss the action taken to improve the school since the last inspection. I considered documentation related to your checks on the impact of performance management and to the quality of teaching and learning. The documentation included a sample of pupils' written work. In addition I scrutinised and discussed with you, senior leaders and governors a range of information on the achievement, over time, of pupils currently in the school. This, and related matters were the key foci of the inspection. I made a brief tour of the school to check on pupil's behaviour and attitudes to learning. I also checked the single central record and found that it met requirements.

### **Context**

Five teachers have left the school since my last visit and one teacher has joined the staff.

## **Main findings**

Since my last visit you have very rapidly established nothing less than a complete change of culture across the school. The school is now much more open and honest and your determination to achieve the best possible outcomes for all pupils is at the heart of everything that you do. You have galvanised the whole staff to embrace, with great enthusiasm, more innovative and effective ways of working. The impact of these improvements is evident in the significantly improved outcomes for current pupils across the school, many of whom join the school from low and sometimes very low starting points.

The large majority of pupils currently in the school are making and exceeding expected progress at a much faster rate than last year. The attainment and progress of those pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding) is particularly impressive, with some progress gaps being reversed, for example in mathematics and reading, and other gaps narrowing consistently. The achievement of most pupils who have a disability or special educational needs and the achievement of the most able pupils is also higher than in previous years.

The school's extremely rigorous tracking systems and very regular pupil progress meetings hold to account very effectively all those responsible for pupils' achievement. These meetings identify very quickly any pupils who are falling behind and sharply individualised support for pupils is put in place with equal speed. Another element in your success in raising achievement is your painstaking and very frequent analysis of the impact on each pupil of every kind of support provided. You do not hesitate to discard quickly anything that is ineffective and to put a more effective programme in its place. This represents very wise practice and value for money in your use of resources.

Similar rigour is evident in your very transparent systems for ensuring that all teachers meet the high expectations that you set for their performance. The judgements that you make about the quality of teaching are always firmly based on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and targets for improvement are highly tailored to teachers' different levels of expertise and experience, to support and challenge them further.

Your own monitoring records clearly show the progress of previously underperforming staff towards becoming good and outstanding teachers. They are proud of their increasing skills and keen to improve further. You and governors have not shied away from making difficult decisions about staffing where there has been any underperformance.

Marking is now consistently informative about how pupils can improve their work and a real dialogue about learning, between pupils and teachers is evident. Teachers are now confident to experiment with different forms of planning and well-targeted questioning that involves all pupils and supports their learning well. This is because of the high-quality continuing professional development that the school provides. You make very effective use of the new ideas brought by newly qualified teachers (NQTs) to the school and offer many opportunities for established teachers to refresh their practice as necessary. As the school goes from strength to strength, you are increasingly called upon to share your own good practice with other schools.

This strong teaching engages pupils more fully in their learning and develops their very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school during this inspection were similarly positive. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their improved rates of attendance this year, which you have worked relentlessly to achieve. The school has a strong commitment to its community and you are working creatively and successfully to encourage parents to be increasingly involved in the school's work.

Governance is now a strength of the school. New and established members have worked tirelessly for its improvement. They are knowledgeable professionals who see their own leadership and management of governance as key to the school's present and future success. Governors keep their practice under constant review and take a very accurate and independent view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They take their links with subjects very seriously.

You have brought about all these improvements by thoughtful and carefully sequenced actions, beginning with the building of a strong, united senior leadership team, which has been the driving force in your rapid journey towards becoming a good school. The very effective measures you have taken to raise achievement, improve pupils' attitudes to learning and secure consistently strong teaching are now well established across the school.

As befits strong leaders, you have now begun to build further capacity for the next stage of improvement, for example, through strengthening middle leadership and management. You have invested considerable resource, for example, in training middle leaders to take on more responsibilities, for example as NQT mentors.

The significant improvements over the last year in pupils' achievement, their improved attitudes to learning and the consistently strong teaching, governance and levels of accountability that you have established across the school and not least, your success in tackling all the recommendations from the last full inspection in 2013, clearly demonstrate the school's capacity to improve still further.

### **External support**

You, senior leaders and governors have taken full advantage of Ofsted's regional improvement seminars and other training organised by the local authority. You have drawn very effectively on the expertise of an external consultant to support the improvements in phonics teaching and marking and to moderate your judgements about the quality of teaching. You have also developed strong links with local outstanding schools to support the improvement of teaching and learning.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire East and as below.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority