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10 September 2014

Mrs Sharon Barnes  
Headteacher  
Birds Bush Primary School  
Birds Bush Road  
Belgrave  
Tamworth  
B77 2NE

Dear Mrs Barnes

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Birds Bush Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 9 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2014. 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. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that action plans, created in response to the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 report, contain sufficient detail so that staff and governors are all clear about the steps that must be taken in order that that the school quickly becomes good
- make sure that plans record who is responsible for each action and set out clearly how school leaders and governors will check that actions have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and accelerating pupils' progress.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher. I also met with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. In addition I spoke with a Local Leader of Education who is providing support to school leaders. I made brief visits to classes and looked at documentation, including information about pupils' attainment and progress. The school action plans were evaluated.

## **Context**

Since the S5 inspection there have been a number of staff changes. One member of the leadership team and two temporary teachers left the school in the summer. Three new teachers joined the school in September. Following the appointment of a new deputy headteacher, the leadership team has been restructured and a new assistant headteacher post has been created.

Staffing arrangements for lunchtimes have been changed and 13 new lunchtime supervisors have been appointed from September 2014.

## **Main findings**

You and other school leaders and governors have ensured that improvement plans are in place that cover all the areas for improvement identified during the recent inspection. However, these plans lack detail and some only identify initial actions rather than clearly identifying the sequence of steps that must be taken in order to ensure that the school is judged as good at the next inspection. Plans do not all identify who is responsible for ensuring that planned actions are carried out or set out the measures and methods that school leaders and governors will use to check that the actions taken have been successful.

Despite this lack of detail and clarity in written plans, you and other school leaders have a thorough and accurate understanding of current strengths and weaknesses in teaching and in pupils' achievement. You have quite rightly ensured that writing remains an important area for improvement, even though this was not identified in the inspection report and you are keenly aware that not enough pupils reach the higher levels, particularly in writing and in reading and maths in Key Stage 1.

You have raised expectations of what pupils can and should achieve and now set more challenging targets for pupils' progress and attainment. You meet regularly with teachers to discuss the progress of pupils within their class. These meetings are becoming more rigorous and effective in challenging underachievement. You have rightly identified that class teachers now need to take more responsibility for preparing for these meetings by analysing information about pupils' progress,

identifying any slow progress and suggesting appropriate next steps and interventions.

You and other school leaders are now making more frequent and effective checks on the quality of teaching by visiting lessons and reviewing the work in pupils' books. You have also encouraged teachers to reflect on their own skills and subject knowledge. For example, the deputy headteacher recently worked with teachers to review teacher confidence and expertise in the teaching of writing. You are now using your findings from these checks and reviews to identify areas for improvement and plan further training and support for teachers. For example, you have planned training sessions and purchased resources to help teachers and teaching assistants improve their skills in teaching grammar, spelling and punctuation. In addition, the assistant headteacher has worked alongside individual teachers to provide support and guidance for teachers as they plan for their teaching in mathematics.

School leaders have reviewed the way that teaching assistants are deployed in school. As a result, additional training has been provided so that teachers and teaching assistants are clear about their complementary roles and responsibilities. Teaching assistants now work more often in classrooms under the guidance of class teachers. Teachers ensure that teaching assistants have regular opportunities to become familiar with lesson objectives and plans and check that teaching assistants understand the purpose of each activity and are clear about what pupils should achieve.

Governors have a clear understanding of the schools' strengths and areas for improvement. They provide a good balance of challenge and support to school leaders and are prepared to ask difficult questions when necessary to hold leaders to account for their work. Governors have participated in a range of training opportunities and keep themselves up to date with information and guidance from national governors' organisations. As a result, governors are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities and have a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching in order to accelerate pupil progress. Some governors have been given specific roles related to particular subjects or to important areas of the school's work such as safeguarding and provision for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. Governors visit the school regularly and so can talk knowledgeably about the improvements being made and their impact.

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

### **External support**

School leaders and governors value the good support that they have received from the local authority. The County Manager for School Improvement visits regularly and has been vigorous in holding leaders to account for the quality of teaching and for pupils' achievement. In particular, the local authority has provided effective support

for newly promoted leaders so that they have developed their skills in analysing information about pupils' progress, evaluating the quality of teaching, and presenting information to governors.

Additional support for school leadership has been provided by a Local Leader in Education (a successful and experienced headteacher). The local authority has also arranged for subject specific training in English and mathematics and for training for particular groups of staff such as teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors.

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

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**