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Mr Andrew Hunt
Headteacher
Golborne Community Primary School
Talbot Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA3 3NN

Dear Mr Hunt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Golborne Community Primary School, Wigan

Following my visit to your school on 19 September 2014, 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 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. The school should take further action to:

- build on the improvements to teaching by supporting teachers to plan activities which help all pupils, particularly the most-able, to deepen and extend their knowledge and skills
- review the policy for tackling bullying by:
 - taking greater account of pupils' perceptions and reports of bullying and name-calling
 - raising parents' awareness of the school's strategies for tackling bullying
 - recording any incidents of bullying and name-calling clearly and analysing this information to identify any 'hot-spots' during the school day and to amend the curriculum

- develop and extend the strategies in place for communicating and consulting with parents to ensure a shared drive for the school's improvement.

Evidence

During my visit, meetings were held with yourself, the deputy headteacher, three senior and three middle leaders, four members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I met with three different groups of pupils to talk about their views on teaching, learning, behaviour and bullying. I also chatted to a number of pupils about these topics in class and at playtime and lunchtime. I spoke to staff and analysed the 20 confidential questionnaires they completed for my visit. I considered Parent View, took account of your own parental questionnaire and talked to parents on the playground. I also had a telephone conversation with one parent. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Your most recent school data, including the 2014 unvalidated results for Years 2 and 6, were considered. I evaluated your policies on safeguarding, anti-bullying and child protection. I also looked at records of your checks on teaching, your records of serious incidents, accident logs, behaviour records and bullying logs. We visited each classroom to talk to pupils, observe them at work and to look at their books. We stayed in three classrooms to observe teaching and learning in greater depth.

Context

There has been considerable change since the inspection in June 2013. Ten members of staff have left the school and three teachers are currently on long-term absence. The middle and senior leadership team has been restructured. Two assistant headteachers have been appointed from existing staff. A new deputy headteacher took up post in June 2014; a reading manager and literacy coordinator joined the school in May; a coordinator for computing, information communication technology (ICT) and physical education has been in place since January and the coordinator of the Early Years Foundation Stage started in September 2014.

Main findings

The pace of change, which began as soon as the inspectors left your school in June 2013, is not faltering. Despite considerable setbacks, your resolve to improve teaching and lift pupils' achievement remains strong and unshakeable. Your journey to good has been neither smooth nor easy. Nonetheless, you and the governing body are tackling barriers head-on. No-one has shirked difficult decisions and everyone is striving to help pupils at Golborne get the best out of their time in primary school.

All of the staff I spoke to during the day and all of those who responded to the confidential questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive about the changes you have brought to the school. They are fully on board. They feel you are taking the right action and putting the needs of pupils first. The following comment from one

member of staff sums up the views of many: 'Our school has moved forward and all the changes have been for the better.'

You are beginning to shoulder less responsibility for driving improvement because you are building an effective senior and middle leadership team who are wedded to your vision. Although many of this team are relatively new teachers to the school they have gelled quickly. They speak enthusiastically, and as one, about all that has been achieved and what more needs to be completed to lift the quality of teaching across the school. These leaders have a good grasp of their role and a clear understanding of what you expect from them. They are leading the way in their different areas by delivering whole-school training, supporting individual staff and relentlessly checking on the quality of teaching. They are making sure teachers have the right guidance to help them do the job well. The curriculum has been overhauled to not only meet the new national requirements but to ensure pupils' learning is lively, relevant and covers all subjects in depth.

Teaching is improving because you are successful in identifying what each member of staff needs to do to raise their game. Checks on teaching are frequent and thorough. You draw on these checks well to gain a view of the quality of teaching day-in and day-out. Time, money and energy are being ploughed into a range of training opportunities, using external expertise when necessary, to update teachers' skills. Higher expectations of all teaching staff are underpinned by clear policies. There is now a Golborne way of teaching and learning. Teachers are buying into this new way of working. All classrooms are welcoming learning areas and all teachers are working purposefully to plan their lessons carefully and to follow the updated marking policy. You are building a firm foundation on which to improve teaching further. Nonetheless, there is still more to do to ensure teaching is good or better each and every day. Teachers have a good grasp of the progress each pupil needs to make across the year to make up for weaknesses in the past. However, teachers do not always use this information well enough to plan activities which allow pupils, particularly the most-able, to deepen their knowledge and skills.

Your work is beginning to pay off; your own data show more pupils are making the progress that they should for their age. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection. At that time, over half of the pupils in Key Stage 2 were lagging well behind other pupils in the country. Previous weak achievement is being halted, although some pupils are still living with gaps in their knowledge and skills which occasionally hamper their learning.

The 2014 unvalidated data do not reflect fully the positive picture of your own data and the work in pupils' books. Standards fell at the end of Key Stage 1. In contrast Year 6 fared slightly better; they left school with standards that are slowly nudging closer to the national average. Mathematics is still a key weakness; one quarter of the Year 6 pupils did not make enough progress in this subject. The achievement of disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs is improving strongly as this group are making the same progress as their classmates. This is also true for pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. However, those pupils who

are more-able and eligible for pupil premium funding achieve less well than other more-able pupils in the school.

The varied 2014 outcomes are mostly due to the considerable staff changes last year which sometimes got in the way of your drive to improve teaching across the board. Staff illness and departures meant you had to constantly backtrack to bring new or returning teachers up to speed. However, you are turning the corner; new appointments have been made and staff are willingly following your lead.

Pupils are mostly positive about the changes you are bringing to their school. They particularly like the care you have taken with the building to make school clean, bright and welcoming. Some pupils are enjoying the new ways of teaching. They say they have to work harder but the activities they do are much more fun. They understand the updated behaviour policy and they believe this stops any poor behaviour in class. However, they have mixed views about the behaviour of pupils on a day-to-day basis. Some believe it is excellent; others are less sure. The same is true for their views on bullying. All agree instances of bullying have reduced, but not every pupil I spoke to is convinced it has been eradicated or is always taken seriously enough by staff.

Your anti-bullying policy is very clear in identifying what constitutes bullying and the steps you take to solve any incidents. However, the policy does not give enough weight to pupils' perceptions about bullying and name-calling. Your records show bullying incidents are recorded and followed-up. However, there is a lack of clarity between serious incidents and alleged bullying incidents which mean you cannot easily identify or analyse any occurrences of bullying and name-calling. As a result, you are not always able to use this information to re-shape the curriculum or identify 'hot-spots' in the school day to prevent them from happening again.

At the time I visited your school there were 22 responses to Parent View. These responses show approximately half of the parents who responded to the survey are unhappy with some or all aspects of the school. Your own questionnaire, which parents completed recently, is more positive. This shows a small minority do not agree that pupils are safe or that bullying is dealt with effectively. However, almost a quarter of these parents did not know whether the school's response to bullying made a big enough difference. Most, but not all, of the parents I chatted to on the playground were also generally positive about the school, the changes being made, the care you give to their children and the response you give when any concerns are raised. You are making headway in improving links with parents through workshops and attendance at class assemblies. However, as you and the governing body recognise, there is scope to enhance these links further and to develop your systems for consulting and communicating with parents so they become key partners in the drive for improvement.

The governing body has moved on a pace since the last inspection. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they act on advice and respond positively to the training they receive. A small group of governors meet

frequently to keep an eye on the school development plan and to check the progress of pupils across the school. All governors play their part. All are involved in looking at pupils' work to check teaching policies are being followed and all meet individual class teachers to discuss how well pupils are moving to their end of year goals. Members of the governing body have stood should-to-shoulder with you since the last inspection, supporting your decisions even when times have been tough.

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

You seek and accept advice from a range of tried and tested sources to make sure you are gaining value for money and benefitting from proven expertise. The work of external consultants is making a positive difference to teaching and supporting senior and middle leaders in their roles. The local authority has confidence in the actions you are taking. You are reflective and evaluative. As a result, you are working in close partnership with the local authority to commission external reviews of some areas of the school to check your judgements are accurate and to help you identify the next steps in your improvement journey.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector