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Rod Dickson, Principal, and Kate Magner, Head of School
King Charles Primary School
Wilkes Avenue
Walsall
WS2 0JN

Dear Mr Dickson and Miss Magner

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to King Charles Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 October, 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 May 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:

- focus monitoring activities more acutely on the achievement of specific groups of pupils, including the more able
- ensure marking leads to equally rapid progress for all groups of pupils in all classes.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with: the Principal and the head of school; senior leaders; and the Chair and two other members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was

evaluated and other documents examined. A short visit was made to each classroom to look at the work in pupils' books and talk to pupils about their learning.

Context

Since the last inspection, three teachers have left the school and four have joined. An additional higher level teaching assistant has also been appointed.

Main findings

You and the head of school have continued to build upon the improvements noted at the last inspection. You lead the school with passion and a commitment to give every pupil the best possible chance to succeed while at the school. You have worked hard to create a physical environment and a culture that pupils and their families value. Pupils show pride in their school and in their work.

Following the inspection, you and the head of school drew up a detailed action plan, supported by a helpful overview which serves to share key priorities with the whole school community. The plan records the actions you and staff intend to take, including how you will support teachers to improve their practice. It indicates how you will judge if these actions are working. The plan includes key dates when you will check if actions have been carried out. The plan does not show how you will judge whether improvement is on track at key milestone points.

The quality of teaching is improving as a result of the effective training and support you have provided for teachers. You have established a range of agreed common approaches in teaching, such as procedures for marking pupils' work and for ensuring more able pupils are challenged more appropriately (known to pupils as the 'Cheeky Challenge'). The impact of these strategies is beginning to show in pupils' books. Teachers now regularly give a suggestion for how work can be improved when marking. There are some examples of this having significant impact on pupils' progress, such as requesting pupils to instantly complete a short task to practise a skill. In the very best examples, pupils' books indicate that the teacher checks whether the pupil is using the new skill in subsequent work. This exemplary practice is not consistent in all classes. Some teachers mark work well for more able pupils, but struggle to do so for those who find learning more difficult. In some books seen, the suggestion was too general or did not require the pupil to make instant improvement. Some comments invited only low-level responses, such as pupils' initials or a smiley face. In these instances, although teachers have worked hard to mark pupils' work, the impact on learning is limited.

You and other leaders keep frequent checks on teaching and have an accurate view of how it is improving. These checks have ensured teachers consistently follow the agreed processes. However, leaders do not drill down deeply enough into the impact of these processes on the achievement of individual pupils and different

groups of pupils, for example the more able. You have devised a strategy to increase the skills of a wider group of leaders to enable them to contribute more effectively to improving pupils' achievement.

Since the last inspection, the refurbishment of the school library has been completed and it has been stocked with a wider range of reading materials. You have also increased older pupils' access to structured reading books for those who need it. You are listening to pupils' views about these developments and have responded to their suggestions.

The governing body has continued to build its capacity to evaluate the work of the school and to hold you to account for its effectiveness. Governors share your ambition for the school to become good and have a clear strategic vision beyond that point. Governors regularly challenge you to demonstrate the impact of actions and financial decisions taken. The governing body is reflective and actively seeks advice to improve governors' skills

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. At this inspection, it was agreed that you will send HMI copies of your reports to the full governing body and reports from external validation visits. It was also agreed that you would send updated information about pupils' achievement as you collect it.

External support

The local authority has rightly reduced the level of support and challenge as the school demonstrates growing capacity to improve. The local authority will keep a check on whether improvement is sustained and will take action as necessary to ensure it continues. The Bentley Federation has added to the school's capacity to build upon improvements made to date and to achieve its longer-term aims for the school's contribution to the local community.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector