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Mrs S Arnold  
Headteacher  
Brook Community Primary School  
Brook  
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TN25 5PB

Dear Mrs Arnold

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brook Community Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 8 October 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 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:

- ensure that pupils are fully engaged in all lessons, understanding exactly what they need to do, with appropriate resources readily available
- review the provision for pupils identified as having special educational needs, so that the impact of this provision on their achievement can be improved further
- create and implement a school policy which shows how much time should be allocated to each subject in every class and what principles should underpin the organisation of class timetables.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met were held with you, four members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We visited lessons in all classes together, where I spoke with some pupils and looked at their work. I evaluated some key school documents, including the school improvement plan, data about pupils' progress, governing body minutes and local authority reports.

## **Context**

Since my last visit, the deputy headteacher has left the school and new members of staff have been appointed.

## **Main findings**

I am pleased to see the progress the school has made since its inspection a year ago. Much has been achieved; there is more work still to do, as we agreed.

Your encouraging leadership continues to be key. You successfully engage staff, governors, pupils and the community in the shared endeavour of building up the school. You provide clear direction, whilst involving people and hearing their ideas and any concerns. You are very good at valuing and using the expertise of others, including governors and colleagues from other nearby schools. Staff appear well motivated. So do the pupils: it was good to hear them speak so positively about their work and learning and to see them so smart in the new uniforms.

You have made many positive and sensible decisions. For instance, the recent restructuring of management roles is well-considered. Governors provided useful support with this and have helped ensure that lines of reporting and accountability are clear. It is good also to see that all subjects have leaders. Rightly, you work with other schools to develop some subjects. The school improvement plan has been much improved. It shows clearly how the school's priorities, which are suitably broad, are being taken forward. We agreed that some of the objectives in the plan could be written more sharply, so that success is easier to measure. It would also be useful to identify clearly which individuals are responsible for monitoring each aspect of the plan. Performance management arrangements for staff are now better structured, with a clear line of sight from the school improvement plan to the professional targets for individuals. Consequently, staff are better supported in, and held to account for, their work.

At my last reported visit, I noted that the school's evaluation of pupil premium expenditure was not sharp enough. This is now much improved. The way the grant is spent is now clearly identified and its impact better analysed. It is good to see that

there is very little gap between the achievement of pupils entitled to the support of the pupil premium and their classmates.

The national test and assessment results for 2014 were mixed. Many of the school's targets were met and most pupils reached the expected standard, showing improvement. At the end of Key Stage 2, too few pupils reached the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics. Results in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and the Year 1 phonics screening were all around the national average. We agreed that further improvements in teaching in 2014/15 should bring better outcomes.

With this in mind, your programme of observing lessons and supporting the improvement of teaching is now better established and more effective. We agreed the importance for the future of observing lessons in all subjects, not only English and mathematics. In the lessons we observed briefly today, I saw clear evidence to support your view that teaching has notably improved in the last year. Teachers seem to have settled well into their new school, or new year groups, as appropriate. We saw examples of whole class teaching which engaged pupils and made them think. Pupils usually settled to their tasks quickly and benefited from work that was well suited to their individual needs. We also noted examples of some very well targeted marking, which pupils used well to improve their work, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The progress of the older pupils at this early stage of the year looks promising. However, we also saw some teaching which was not as sharp and where pupils didn't have access quickly enough to the resources that they needed. In this case, some pupils' attention began to drift. It is important that improvements to teaching are consistent across classes and lessons.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is carefully considered and improving. The governor with responsibility for this area takes a keen and helpful interest. You have taken useful local authority advice on board. There is some evidence, however, that outcomes for these pupils, although becoming better, are not yet improving as fast as those for many other pupils. It would be sensible, therefore, for the school to carry out a detailed review of its work on special educational needs, and its impact, and use the findings to inform further developments through the school improvement plan. The local authority is happy to support this process.

The school's commitment to a broad curriculum is important and well-established. It is rightly given prominence in the school improvement plan. It was good to see evidence of improving use of outdoor spaces, visits out and the purchase of new sports equipment. We talked about the school becoming involved in the BBC 'Ten Pieces' music project. It will be helpful now for the school to develop its policy on the teaching of all subjects, by deciding how much notional teaching time should be given to each subject and how all subjects should be timetabled and, as appropriate, linked together. The school needs to consider for itself whether English and mathematics over-dominate the class timetables, especially in the mornings.

The governing body continues to improve its work successfully. Following a review of its work, it has undertaken a successful re-constitution, welcoming new members with useful skills and experience. Governors are rightly considering how they might become more accessible to parents, in appropriately informal ways. They know the school well and are asking increasingly sharp, but also rightly supportive, questions of you and the staff. I discussed with governors how useful it is for these questions, and the answers, to be clearly recorded in meeting minutes. The governing body ensures the school has appropriate performance management processes and contributes well to the development of the school improvement plan. Its own action plan is useful in extending the value and impact of its work.

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**

The local authority's work in the school continues to be effective and attentive to the right areas, as at my last reported visit. I am pleased to see that the school will continue to be supported one of the same officers this year as last.

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

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**