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13 January 2015

Jack Newton  
Headteacher  
Grasvenor Avenue Infant School  
Grasvenor Avenue  
Barnet  
EN5 2BY

Dear Jack Newton,

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Grasvenor Avenue Infant School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 January 2015, 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 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 September 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 the strategic plan includes:
  - tight timescales and clear milestones to improve children's attainment
  - specific monitoring and evaluation by governors and trustees to check progress against priorities for improvement.
- implement the recommendations in the review of governance.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other leaders, a representative of the Governing Body and the Academy Trust and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The strategic plans were evaluated. Brief visits were made to classes in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. During visits to lessons, the inspector spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. A range of documentation was scrutinised

including records of governing body meetings, pupil performance information and the single central record.

## **Context**

In September, the headteacher at Grasvenor Infant School also became the interim executive headteacher for Underhill Primary School. Since the inspection, no staff have left the school. The review of governance has been completed.

## **Main findings**

Following the inspection in September, the headteacher and governing body responded swiftly to its findings. They identified a limited leadership capacity to tackle the areas for improvement, due to the school's small size and its recent support for Underhill Primary School. Governors appointed a part-time head of school to take responsibility for day-to-day management and to lead improvements in the quality of teaching. The executive headteacher can now function strategically in both schools. Staff welcome the additional support and feedback they now receive from senior leaders, which they say, helps them to assess and develop their practice.

Since the inspection, leaders evaluate teaching more rigorously. They observe teaching formally as well as frequent 'drop in' visits to lessons. In addition, leaders regularly monitor children's work to assess standards and the quality of teachers' marking. They include children's views about the level of challenge they receive in their lessons. Leaders are able to provide staff with meaningful and accurate feedback because of these checks; consequently, teachers have increasing expectations for children's achievement. Children's books show the quality and quantity of work has clearly increased since the onset of this tighter monitoring programme.

Teachers acknowledge marking was inconsistent so they worked together to update the existing policy. Children know their targets, which are now attached to the inside front cover of their books. They receive verbal guidance about how to improve their work and through 'post-it' notes that record key questions, comments and next steps.

The headteacher has introduced a new system to track children's achievement and progress. Since the inspection, staff now access and analyse this information which has increased awareness of standards in their own class and across the school. Teachers' plans show increased challenge for children of different abilities and higher aspirations to reach year-end targets in English and mathematics.

Senior leaders are nevertheless aware that rates of progress are not rapid enough, particularly for the most able. Some children repeat tasks they can already do; this is more prevalent in mathematics than English. Raising attainment for the most able is a priority in the action plan.

Since the inspection, each teacher has additional leadership responsibility. The head of school works with them to develop these new roles. For example, she models effective practice through shared lesson observations and work scrutiny. This ensures their evaluations of teaching and learning are accurate. Middle leaders also externally moderate their judgements with their equivalent leader and year group teacher in the partner school. As a direct result of this new support, middle leaders feel confident to challenge the status quo and introduce initiatives to increase the school's capacity for improvement.

The strategic plan identifies correct priorities but monitoring and evaluation lacks precise timescales. As an example, milestones do not indicate when pupils' attainment or attendance will match and exceed average. Governors' monitoring role is not linked to the school's priorities, which weakens their challenge to leaders about how quickly the school is improving throughout the year.

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 provided light touch support for the school as an academy. However, this increased due to shared governance and interim leadership support for the link local authority school. A leadership review of both schools is planned. Since the inspection, the interim executive headteacher commissioned additional support from Barnet Partnership for School Improvement. Consultants worked with middle leaders to audit reading books. They have provided training in writing, display and in the early years foundation stage. This support is valued by the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Debono

**Her Majesty's Inspector**