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Alan Beale
Head of School
Regents Park Community Primary School
Arthur Street
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Dear Mr Beale

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Regents Park Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 March 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 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. Please pass on my thanks to the teachers whose classrooms I visited and to the people who gave of their time to speak with me.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 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:

- develop and strengthen the skills and expertise of middle leaders in order to extend and deepen the capacity to drive improvement
- supplement the action plan with a target for attainment in phonics at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and consider revising the target for phonics at the end of Year 1.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the executive headteacher, the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the leader of English, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. We discussed the

action taken since the last inspection. I also observed the teaching of phonics and of guided reading in several classrooms. I evaluated the school's action plan.

Context

Three members of teaching staff have left the school since the inspection in November. Regents Park has entered into a collaboration with Story Wood Primary School. This is anticipated to last for about two years.

Main findings

You and the executive headteacher have made a commitment to Regents Park and intend to continue leading the school in the medium term. This has brought much needed stability and reassurance to the staff. Several people who spoke to me said that morale is greatly improved and that there is a clear sense of direction and purpose.

You and the staff are making headway with the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in November. What needs to be done is set out clearly in the action plan and it is being implemented with an appropriate sense of urgency. The phonics sessions that I observed confirmed what the executive headteacher said at the start of the morning; there has clearly been an improvement in how well phonics is taught. This is as a result of training and support for teachers and teaching assistants. In all classes, pupils worked with interest and showed that they understood and could apply what they were being taught. There is still some way to go to make sure that all teachers are equally confident in their subject knowledge, however. You have also adopted a new reading scheme that comprises phonically decodable books for the younger pupils.

The teaching of reading has also improved. Reading activities have a much higher profile. Guided reading sessions are now sharply focused on making sure that all pupils are involved in challenging activities that require them to read with understanding. Pupils' guided reading workbooks are well presented and include an objective for each session and the targets that pupils are aiming for. Pupils all now have reading records and are expected to read regularly at home. Pupils are increasingly reading for pleasure. Pupils' reading ages have been tested and generally show a positive picture across the school, as well as highlighting some areas that require attention. Your second round of tests will enable you to gauge more precisely the impact of the action that has been taken.

You have taken steps to make sure that assessments are robust and accurate across all key stages. There is a more secure baseline in the Early Years Foundation Stage from which to judge progress. Staff across the school have been involved in moderating judgements with staff from the partner school. Your assessments show that the current Year 6 is predicted to do well in this year's national tests and assessments. However, the proportions predicted to make more than expected

progress in writing are not as strong as that seen nationally last year. We discussed this in relation to the grade description for good achievement in the *Inspection Handbook*.

Assessments show that attainment in other year groups is not as strong and there is some way to go, particularly in the lower years of the school, to close the gap on the targets that have been set and the expectations for pupils' ages. The target in the action plan for the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check is set below last year's national figure. This is not ambitious enough. In addition, there is no target for attainment in phonics by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This needs to be added.

You and the executive headteacher are highly ambitious for the school and have high expectations of both pupils and staff. There is a positive climate and staff are keen to embrace change and move forward.

You currently have five assistant headteachers who lead on different aspects of the school's work. They mainly quite new in their roles and are working to develop their skills. Although middle leadership was not highlighted as an area for improvement during the inspection, strengthening the leadership expertise of this group of staff is an important step that must be taken as the school works towards becoming good.

The governing body has responded well to the external review of governance. The governing body has been reconstituted and is working in collaboration with the governing body of Story Wood. Governors say that they feel empowered and have a much greater understanding of what their role entails and how they can contribute to the school's continued improvement. Governors are being recruited in the light of the skills and expertise they can offer. Governors spoke highly of the improvements that have been made to the school's website and how this is leading to better communication with parents and pupils.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I would be grateful if you could send me copies of any reviews carried out in future and of assessments of progress as and when they are carried out.

External support

The local authority enabled the collaboration between Story Wood and Regents Park to happen after the previous interim arrangements ended. This has proved a positive move, as you and the executive headteacher both have experience of success in leading school improvement. Where additional support is needed, such as for the Early Years Foundation Stage or with governance, you draw upon other sources of support. This is having a positive impact. For example, the work of the National Leader of Governance has been instrumental in bringing about the improvement in the effectiveness of the governing body's work. The local authority is keeping an eye

on the progress that is being made, by commissioning regular reviews that are carried out by headteachers of other schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector