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Mrs Jane Barlow
Bearwood Primary School
Sindlesham
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG41 5BB

Dear Mrs Barlow

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bearwood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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.

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

- sharpen the action plan so it is clear:
 - when actions will take place
 - who will lead on each action
 - who will monitor the effectiveness of each action
 - how success will be measured against outcomes achieved by pupils

- ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate
- arrange a full review of governance.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from Wokingham local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's action plan. In addition, I scrutinised other school documents, including records of leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning. The single central record was checked. I joined you on a tour of the school and visited every class, taking the opportunity to look at pupils' work.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to staffing. Three class teachers who had been absent have now returned, two on a part-time basis and one full-time. A member of staff has resigned as leader for early years but retains the post of teacher with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs. From April, a different senior leader will become the school's leader for early years. A teacher with responsibility for a class of Year 5 and 6 pupils is absent. Senior leaders are sharing teaching responsibilities for this class.

Main findings

You and the school's leaders have taken on board the recommendations from the previous inspection report. You accept the findings and are using them to galvanise and refocus senior leaders' efforts. Everyone shares your commitment to 'becoming a good school' once again. There is renewed vigour and determination to improve the school.

You are intent on gathering wider evidence on a more regular basis to raise standards. Information about how well pupils are learning is gathered more frequently. Meetings to discuss pupils' progress with teachers take place routinely. Senior leaders have helpfully modelled discussions to ensure that teachers are clear what is expected. As a result, teachers' accountability for how well pupils are learning is strengthening appropriately. Teachers identify more readily pupils in their classes who are not making the progress expected. They plan useful actions to support these pupils' learning more effectively. This is beginning to help pupils make the progress they are capable of. However, leaders now need to make sure that the information they gather is accurate.

Well-judged changes to the way the curriculum is organised and delivered are contributing well to improving standards. For example, leaders acknowledge that altering the timing of numeracy sessions in early years' classes is ensuring children are more responsive to new learning. More children are developing the skills and knowledge that are typical for their age than in the past. Teachers' planning has

strengthened and focuses on helping pupils to acquire new skills. You have ensured that classroom displays are more informative and helpful for pupils. This sharper focus on learning is contributing well to improving pupils' levels of attainment. School information shows that pupils are making greater progress than in the past and are beginning to catch up. More pupils are achieving the levels they are capable of. For example, standards in phonics have continued to rise and more Year 1 pupils are working at the standard expected for their age.

Since the last inspection, leaders have sensibly re-written the action plan to ensure that actions are appropriate to the areas requiring improvement. While the plan describes actions in depth, it is not clear enough what the intended impact is on outcomes for pupils. This makes it difficult to check that actions are making the difference where it matters. Also, it is unclear who is leading certain aspects and when actions will take place. Refining the plan will ensure leaders and governors are able to evaluate, more clearly, the impact of actions on improving teaching and learning.

Governors have recently revised their roles and responsibilities, adjusting their committee structure to align more closely with the school's improvement priorities. The newly-formed data committee is offering greater challenge to school leaders about how well pupils are learning. Governors are committed to monitoring the school's improvement more closely and plan to gather more information first-hand.

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

Following the previous inspection, the local authority promptly increased its support for school leaders, initially visiting the school on a weekly basis. These visits have been particularly useful and have included helpful sessions to support teachers in effective lesson planning. Also, an advisor has conducted helpful lesson observations alongside senior leaders. The school has benefitted from regular visits from a consultant for early years and is part of an 'Excellence Working Group'.

A school improvement board, which includes local authority representatives, the headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body, have met once to discuss how well pupils are learning. This is welcome but would be more useful if discussion points were agreed in advance. This would allow leaders to present information more fully and members to offer challenge that is more helpful.

The local authority has brokered useful support for governors. The Chair of the Governing Body has particularly benefited from support from a National Leader of Governance. A date for an external review of governance is yet to be agreed. This

remains a key priority so that governors can use the findings to develop their expertise further.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector