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28 April 2015

Richard Hunter  
Executive headteacher  
Cottesbrooke Junior School  
Cedars Avenue  
Birmingham  
B27 6JL

Dear Mr Hunter

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cottesbrooke Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 April 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 November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- make sure that the most able pupils are moved onto sufficiently challenging activities as soon as they are ready during the lesson, particularly in mathematics
- ensure pupils present their work neatly in all subjects
- make sure that feedback to staff places a greater emphasis on the actions teachers need to take to help different groups of pupils make faster progress.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school for Cottesbrooke Junior, the head of school for Robin Hood Academy, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers with responsibility for English and mathematics, representatives from the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school

improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed including information relating to pupils' achievement and information about the quality of teaching. The head of school for Cottesbrooke Junior accompanied me on brief visits to some classroom. We talked to pupils about their work and we looked at examples of pupils' writing and mathematics books.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes at leadership level. The headteacher left in December 2014. The local authority responded by putting in place interim leaders. You, the head of school for Cottesbrooke Junior and the head of school for Robin Hood Primary have been working at the school since January 2015. The three of you are expecting to continue working at Cottesbrooke until August 2016. Five teachers have left the school since November 2014. Three teachers and an assistant headteacher have joined the school since January 2015. The newly appointed assistant headteacher has taken responsibility for leading developments in reading and writing across the school. At the same time, the existing assistant headteacher took responsibility for leading developments in mathematics. A new Chair of the Governing Body was elected in April 2015.

## **Main findings**

You and the heads of schools have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Suitable changes are being made to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are working well to raise teachers' expectations of pupils. Through regular discussions with individual teachers leaders are identifying the pupils that would benefit from additional support and adapting teaching groups accordingly. Your information about pupils' achievement and work in pupils' books confirms that pupils are making better progress than previously.

The school improvement plan has been suitably revised. The actions within the plan make clear how teaching, pupils' learning, leadership and governance will be strengthened. Although the plan contains measureable outcomes, it does not always specify who will check that the actions within the plan are making enough of a difference to pupils' achievement and teaching.

Senior leaders and assistant headteachers are taking appropriate and determined action to improve teaching. Teachers are benefitting from continuous support from senior leaders during lessons and from regular opportunities to observe effective practice at Robin Hood.

During our brief visits to classrooms, we observed pupils enjoying their activities and working together well. Pupils told me that they are becoming 'confident learners' because teachers provide clear instructions and make sure that they understand how to complete their work. Teachers are successfully encouraging pupils to think things through and solve problems for themselves. Pupils in Year 4 for instance worked

diligently while using their knowledge of multiplication to solve a mathematical problem. Work in pupils' books shows that they are increasingly using punctuation and grammar correctly because of the higher emphasis teachers are placing on these aspects.

Senior leaders provide regular and generally helpful feedback for individual teachers. However, this feedback does not always make clear how teachers can help different groups of pupils make faster progress. Work in pupils' books shows that the activities for the most able pupils are sometimes too easy. These pupils are not always moved onto new learning quickly enough during lessons. This is particularly the case in mathematics.

Teachers' marking has improved. They use marking well to celebrate pupils' achievements and also to tell pupils what could be even better. We saw examples of pupils using the feedback from teachers to correct their errors and improve their work. The presentation of pupils' work varies between classes and subjects. In some classes, pupils ensure they write neatly and present their work to a high standard.

Governors are supportive and keen to increase their involvement in the work of the school. Recent training and the opportunity to observe a governing body meeting at Robin Hood has helped them to gain a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. You are providing governors with appropriate information. This is helping them to begin to ask pertinent questions about pupils' achievement and teaching. You are in the process of arranging an external review of governance and pupil premium expenditure.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority advisers working with the school are providing helpful advice and support. The local authority took appropriate action and organised for senior leaders from Robin Hood to lead Cottesbrooke Junior. This arrangement has considerably strengthened leadership, and it is helping to raise pupils' achievement and improve teaching. Local authority training is contributing to improvements in governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board

cc. Local authority