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6 May 2015

Mohammed Sarwar  
Headteacher  
Marlborough Junior School  
Green Lane  
Small Heath  
Birmingham  
B10 9NY

Dear Mr Sarwar

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

Following my visit to your school on 6 May 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. Following this visit, HMI recommend that:

- senior leaders make sure that all teachers plan sufficiently challenging activities for the most able pupils in mathematics
- the local authority arranges for senior leaders and staff to link with another good or better school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the school's improvement adviser, 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 written feedback to teachers following lesson observations, information about the quality of teaching, and the latest information about pupils'

achievement. You joined me on brief visits to some classes. We talked to pupils about their learning and reviewed some pupils' writing and mathematics work.

## **Context**

Since the inspection in December 2014, there have been some changes in staffing. One assistant headteacher and two class teachers have left the school. One assistant headteacher has relinquished his leadership responsibilities. The governing body has appointed two new assistant headteachers and two class teachers. You have reviewed the roles of the assistant headteachers to ensure that their responsibilities are closely aligned to the school's improvement priorities.

## **Main findings**

You and other senior leaders are taking appropriate action to strengthen teaching and raise pupils' achievement. Your records confirm that pupils are making faster progress than in the past and that teaching is improving.

Following lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work senior, leaders provide teachers with helpful advice. You are making effective use of 'individual support plans' to identify the specific actions teachers need to take to help all pupils make faster progress and to ensure that teachers receive the support they need to improve their practice. You and the deputy headteacher meet regularly with staff to discuss and arrange additional support for individuals and groups of pupils who would benefit from extra help with their learning.

In all the classes we visited, pupils demonstrated positive attitudes to learning. They were keen to talk about their work and what they were learning in different subjects. Pupils in Year 3 for example, were keen to tell me everything they had learnt about volcanoes. We observed teachers encouraging pupils to use the correct methods to answer mathematical questions, and to use grammar and punctuation correctly when writing. We also observed teachers and teaching assistants providing pupils who were finding the activities difficult with precise guidance.

Work in pupils' writing and mathematics books shows that teachers are getting better at planning suitably challenging activities for pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs. During our brief visits to lessons we observed these pupils using a range of equipment to help them successfully complete their activities. 'This list of words is helping me with my spellings,' commented one child as he wrote instructions for a board game. You recognise that teachers do not consistently provide the most able pupils with sufficiently challenging work. This is especially the case in mathematics. Pupils are not always given the chance to deepen their mathematical thinking because their activities are too easy. Senior leaders' plans for ensuring pupils in all year groups have the opportunities to practise and extend their writing skills are appropriate.

Teachers' marking has improved. Teachers acknowledge pupils' achievements and clearly identify errors. Pupils told me that teachers' marking helps them to make their work 'even better'. The presentation of pupils' work varies between classes. Some teachers for example, expect pupils to form their letters and numbers neatly and to draw lines with a ruler. In contrast, a few teachers allow pupils to scribble in their books.

The external review of the governing body took place last term. Governors have completed an audit of their skills and identified the training they require. This training has been arranged. You and other senior leaders are providing governors with helpful information about pupils' achievement and teaching. Governors are beginning to use this information to ask searching questions about the difference senior leaders are making to the progress of different groups of pupils.

The revised school improvement plan is appropriately focused on tackling the weaknesses identified at the section 5 inspection. Actions for improving teaching, raising standards and strengthening leadership are appropriate. Governors are intending on establishing a committee that will meet regularly to check the impact of the actions within the plan on pupils' achievement.

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**

Through his regular visits, the school's local authority adviser is providing senior leaders with effective support and guidance. He is helping senior leaders to prioritise what needs to happen in the school and to take appropriate action.

The local authority has not secured long-term support for senior leaders and staff at Marlborough Junior. In the interim, you have personally contacted leaders from other local schools and made arrangements for staff from Marlborough to learn from effective practice. This is contributing to the improvements in teaching and pupils' learning.

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**