

18 June 2015

Mrs Sarah Midgley  
Headteacher  
Park Primary School  
Rutland Street  
Colne  
Lancashire  
BB8 0QJ

Dear Mrs Midgley

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Park Primary School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 17 June 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 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:

- further improve pupils' writing, by ensuring teachers routinely correct errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation and that they then check that pupils do not repeat such mistakes.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also considered a range of documentation, including information on pupils' progress and an analysis of surveys that had been conducted with parents. During the visit, I observed pupils learning in a number of classrooms, scrutinised a sample of pupils' work and talked to pupils informally during lunchtime.

### **Context**

The first monitoring visit took place at the end of March 2014. At that point, I found that school leaders and governors were not taking effective action in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Since that visit, there have been many changes, particularly at the level of leadership. The associate headteacher has returned to

her former school. The current deputy headteacher was acting headteacher for one term before the current headteacher took up the post in January 2015. There have been some changes to governance, including the fact that there is now a designated member of the governing body with responsibility for checking up on the progress of disadvantaged students. There have also been a number of changes to middle leadership. The school is in the process of appointing two assistant headteachers with responsibility for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, with effect from September 2015, to strengthen further the senior leadership team. Two new teachers will join the school in the autumn term.

## **Main findings**

This school has made great strides since my first visit. Stability at leadership level and much improved governance have created the structure that has underpinned a rapid reversal in fortunes. As a result, Park Primary is in a much better position than hitherto and is well on the way to becoming a good school.

The deputy headteacher, in her capacity as acting headteacher, was the single most determining factor in beginning to turn this school around. She provided much needed stability and direction at a crucial juncture; the staff responded well to her instruction and the pupils began to make much better progress. You and the deputy headteacher have complementary skills and collaborate well together. Since your appointment, you have provided strong strategic leadership, encouraging the school to look outward and learn from best practice. In addition, you have a clear vision for the future development of the school founded on a perceptive grasp of its strengths and remaining weaknesses.

Governors have responded well to the challenge I presented them with at my first visit. They are now a well-informed body that acts in a unified fashion in the best interests of the pupils. Governors took to heart the findings of the review into governance. They faced up to their weaknesses and rapidly set about sorting them out, for example by having training in how to unpick the information they receive on pupils' progress. As a result, they are far more prepared to challenge school leaders. Governors attend regular pupil progress meetings and are attached to year groups; they receive frequent reports from class teachers as to how well pupils are doing. Consequently, they are far better informed than they used to be regarding the overall quality of teaching.

Pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 has improved exponentially since my first visit. According to information provided by the school, Year 6 pupils are on target to exceed by some distance the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 2. This represents a substantial improvement on this time last year when performance was below government floor standards. Improvement has been particularly marked in the quality of pupils' writing. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Key Stage 1 continue to make similarly good progress to that made at the time of the previous inspection.

School leaders have a much more accurate view of how well pupils are doing; information is collected frequently and teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their classes. The local authority has worked very closely with the school to verify pupil progress data and this information has also been moderated by other local schools.

You and your deputy headteacher have established a thoroughgoing approach to monitoring the quality of teaching. You pop into lessons frequently, do spot checks on the quality of marking and talk to pupils about what they are learning. This has had a substantial impact on improving the overall quality of teaching, but in addition it has also increased pupils' engagement with their learning. For example, during my visit, when I spoke to pupils they, without hesitation, talked freely and enthusiastically about what they have enjoyed in their lessons, from calculating the perimeter of a shape to learning about Egyptian mummies. Another pupil told me how she had enjoyed representing the school in the local 'pupils' parliament' and how she had fed back information she had gathered to the School Council.

Pupils' behaviour has improved immeasurably since my first visit. Attendance has risen and there has been a marked reduction in the rate of persistent absenteeism. This is because the school reaches out far more effectively to parents who were hard to reach in the past. Pupils conduct themselves very well as they move about the school and pupils in Key Stage 2 are good role models for younger children; for example, during my visit an older pupil very helpfully assisted Year 1 pupils in finding their outdoor coats as they got ready to go out to play.

### **External support**

The local authority has worked highly effectively with school leaders and has contributed well to the drive for improvement. Support has been provided in assessment, training for governors and help in dealing with personnel issues. The local authority has started to reduce the level of support offered as it feels the school is making good progress in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The school works well with other schools in the locality, which has also contributed highly effectively in moving the school forward.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant

**Her Majesty's Inspector**