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Mr Lee Dumbell  
Headteacher  
Norwood Primary School  
Norwood Crescent  
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Dear Mr Dumbell

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Norwood Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 7 December 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 June 2015. 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 in order to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, four governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your action plan and reviewed the record of monitoring activities undertaken by you and other leaders since the inspection. I considered information about the progress of pupils currently attending the school. I read notes of visits from local authority staff and minutes of governing body meetings. I made brief visits to most classes and spoke informally to pupils about their work.

## Context

Two teachers who were on temporary contracts have left the school since the recent inspection. One teacher has returned to school following maternity leave and a newly qualified teacher has been appointed. The school is expanding and will include three Reception classes in September 2016.

## Main findings

You and your staff responded quickly and resolutely to address the areas for improvement found by inspectors. You are determined that the school's very positive ethos should be matched by the best possible progress and highest academic standards for all pupils. Your action plan is precise and well focused. Those who are responsible for leading on improvements are clearly identified. There is a well-defined monitoring strategy that includes dates for all key actions to be completed but does not always distinguish between monitoring of the actions that have taken place and evaluation of their impact.

You have reconfigured leaders' roles and distributed leadership responsibilities among an extended team. This well-judged move has enhanced the school's capacity to improve teaching and learning. The school's leaders for English and mathematics are passionate about their subjects. They research practice from other schools and adapt it to best meet the needs of Norwood pupils.

In mathematics, the daily revisiting of basic arithmetical operations is ensuring that pupils have a secure foundation on which to build their skills. Initiatives such as 'no pen day' encourage pupils to explore mathematics in different ways, including through practically based experiences. Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to practise problem-solving. There is a strong emphasis on promoting enjoyment in mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 5 are well motivated by the prospect of joining the '100 club' if they can demonstrate effective consolidation of their numeracy skills.

The school's work to improve pupils' writing is clear from the many well-presented displays around school that celebrate pupils' interest in different text types. The visit by an actor playing Samuel Pepys was a good stimulus for writing for Key Stage 2 pupils who were learning about the Great Fire of London. Pupils in Year 2 were very proud of how they could change their sentences by using ambitious vocabulary in writing the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, for instance by substituting 'built' with 'constructed'. The school's emphasis on handwriting is paying dividends both in pupils' presentation of their work and in their fluency and speed of writing. Earning a 'pen licence' is a matter of pride for pupils in Key Stage 2.

The school's system for tracking pupils' achievement is robust. Leaders analyse the performance of pupil groups and classes closely and there is a well-planned system to support pupils who are falling behind national expectations, including through

small-group support, homework club and specific programmes to meet individual needs. You and your senior leaders have developed a clear approach to assessment without National Curriculum levels that is rooted in teachers' observations and assessments of pupils' skills and knowledge in the context of national expectations.

Your insistence on the consistent application of school policies is improving the quality of teaching. The school's marking code is prominently displayed in classrooms and your monitoring indicates that it is used effectively by teachers to celebrate pupils' achievements and guide their next steps. The school has reduced the number of exercise books that pupils use so that they can more easily act on their teachers' feedback because they have fewer places in which to check it. Leaders have high expectations of how classrooms are set out and how pupils' work is presented. You are also keen for pupils and staff to enjoy working at Norwood. You have successfully combined increased rigour in your monitoring with the maintenance of high morale. As one leader put it: 'we all believe passionately in this school and we work together to make a difference'. The good behaviour and positive attitudes of pupils that were apparent at the last inspection are still evident and teachers are capitalising on pupils' keenness to learn.

Outcomes for pupils are improving. In 2015, the proportion of pupils at the end of Year 1 who reached the national expectation in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) was again above average. Attainment at Key Stage 1 continued on the rising trend that has now been evident for three years. Pupils left Year 2 in 2015 with attainment that was in line with that found nationally. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 showed considerable improvement from that in 2014. The impact of the school's work to improve standards in English grammar, punctuation and spelling and in writing was particularly evident in pupils' improved test results. Overall, the standards attained by Year 6 pupils in 2015 were slightly above the national figure.

Most pupils made at least expected progress from their relative starting points. Half of the pupils made more than expected progress in reading, a figure higher than found nationally. Progress was not as strong for some pupils identified as having special educational needs and for some who had low attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. Gaps remained in 2015 between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding and all pupils nationally.

The school's own information about the progress of pupils currently attending the school indicates that the improving picture is set to continue. Teachers are working hard to make learning more challenging, in line with the demands of the National Curriculum. They are now assessing pupils' prior knowledge and skills when they start on new topics in mathematics and English. They are using the outcomes of these assessments to plan 'learning journeys' that are prominently displayed in their classrooms and which provide pupils with a clear route map and expectations of what they should achieve. Pupils are responding positively to this approach and are becoming more skilled in mastering concepts. Parent governors with whom I spoke

confirmed that they can see an increase in the level of challenge with which their children are presented.

The school's processes for assessing the skills and knowledge of children entering Reception have been strengthened. The leader of early years is checking teachers' assessments with staff from other schools to ensure consistency. The indoor learning environment has been improved. Staff have checked resources and reorganised them so that children can benefit from some being introduced at different points during the year. Modifications to the outdoor environment have begun and plans have been drawn up to improve usage of the considerable space available. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception rose significantly in 2015 and was above the national average.

The governors provide enthusiastic support for the school. The external review of the governing body that was recommended at the last inspection has been completed. Following this review, governors have assigned themselves to specific areas within the school improvement plan so that their focus is on groups within school rather than individual classes. This realignment has helped them to have a more informed view of pupils' progress; they are in a better position now to spot gaps in achievement and to challenge school leaders.

An external review of the effectiveness of the school's spending of pupil premium funding has been undertaken, led by the headteacher of an outstanding Sefton primary school. The deputy headteacher has researched which uses of pupil premium funding are most successful nationally. As a result of this, and of the review, the school has changed its approach to tracking the progress of disadvantaged pupils and has developed further approaches to supporting their needs, including a homework club for those who may benefit from support with independent learning. The learning mentor works hard to ensure that pupils attend regularly and has had success in reducing persistent absence for some disadvantaged pupils.

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 has provided timely, proportionate and effective support to the school. An adviser helped leaders to develop a clear action plan in response to the findings of the last inspection. Consultant support focused on raising standards in English and mathematics has been well received by staff and has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and improving outcomes for pupils. An early years adviser has helped the early years leader to review the management of baseline information about the skills of children when they join school. Local authority staff have run workshops for parents to help them to support their children's learning. This has been valued; parents regard the school highly and are willing participants

on its improvement journey. The school is part of an active local network of schools whose work is supported by the local authority; this enables the sharing of effective practice across schools.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Sefton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**