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Mrs J Williams
Headteacher
Barley Close Community Primary School
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South Gloucestershire
BS16 9DL

Dear Mrs Williams

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Barley Close
Community Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 16 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. The school should take further action to:

- make sure that development plans state precisely how and when leaders, including governors, will check that actions taken are improving the achievement and progress of pupils
- provide increased opportunities for pupils to participate in activities at playtime and lunchtimes to reduce boredom and ensure behaviour is consistently good.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, the vice-chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions

taken since the last inspection. I spoke informally to parents at the start of the school day to gather their views on the school. Together, we visited classrooms to observe learning and pupils' attitudes to learning. I looked at a random selection of books. Informal discussions were held with pupils during playtime and lunchtime. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's records of the outcomes of monitoring activities undertaken by you. The school development plans were evaluated.

Context

You have started in your role as headteacher since the last inspection in June 2015. Three new teachers have joined the school, one of whom is a newly qualified teacher. One of the substantive deputy headteachers is currently on secondment and is due to return in February 2016.

Main findings

You have set about improving the school with urgency and determination. As headteacher you are passionate about the quality of education pupils receive. This is reflected in your high aspirations and unwavering ambition for all pupils to be successful. Staff share in your vision and describe you as an 'inspiration' and a 'breath of fresh air'. However, you are fully aware that there is much work to be done to tackle the legacy of underachievement and ensure all pupils achieve well.

You quickly prioritised the need to improve the quality of teaching. Through targeted staff training and the sharing of good practice you are rapidly tackling weaknesses identified. By visiting lessons and reviewing the work in pupils' books you have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching. Improvement in practice and raising the expectations of teachers and pupils is beginning to raise pupils' achievement. This is especially so in writing, where there is strong evidence that pupils are making better progress. For example, the recent writing based on 'The Snowman' completed by all pupils clearly shows them implementing their knowledge and understanding of sentence construction, spelling, grammar and punctuation to great effect for their age and stage of development. The writing produced was of high quality.

Pupils have a greater understanding of what they are learning and what they need to do in order to improve, through the introduction of 'hot and cold' tasks. This activity takes place at the start of each new topic as seen in pupils' English and mathematics work. It provides pupils with the opportunity to share with their teachers what they already know. Teachers then use this information to make sure they plan meaningful and exciting lessons that stretch and challenge all pupils regardless of background, ability or starting point. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils were relishing the challenge in mathematics, finding percentages of money through a problem-solving task. Pupils were able to clearly articulate their learning, demonstrating the strong progress they were making.

All leaders are actively participating in helping to improve pupils' achievement. Development plans accurately identify the key priorities in improving pupil achievement. However, these plans do not focus sharply enough on how and when leaders, including governors, will monitor the impact that actions taken are having on pupil achievement and progress.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's current performance and are acutely aware of the legacy of poor pupil achievement. They are working closely with the new leader to tackle this. There is evidence in minutes that governors are asking more probing questions about the quality of teaching and the impact this is having on pupils' achievement and progress. This is enabling them to hold school leaders to account with greater rigour, agreeing that this must continue to drive the pace of change required to become a good school.

You and your staff are working hard to tackle some of the behaviour issues identified in the last inspection. Pupils describe how they clearly understand the new rules and parents welcome the 'no nonsense' approach taken by the school to ensure pupils behave well. Nevertheless, there are still some concerns raised by parents that behaviour needs further improvement. As a school you are working effectively with outside agencies to support those pupils identified with complex emotional and social needs to ensure that their behaviour does not hamper their learning or that of their friends. Learning behaviours are rapidly improving as a result of the better teaching and increased challenge pupils are receiving. Behaviour at playtime and lunchtime, while mostly good, could be even better if pupils had access to a range of outdoor activities to interest them and further develop their social skills. Pupils told the inspector that they become bored and restless at these times because there is very little for them to do.

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

You are outward looking and welcome the good level of support and challenge the local authority is providing in your quest to drive up standards. For example, the quality of teachers' questioning has improved since the last inspection. There is evidence in lessons and books that more probing questioning by teachers ensures greater challenge for pupils, especially the most able.

The establishment of a link with the NEXUS Teaching School Alliance ensures that staff are accessing high-quality support. This group of seven local schools have come together to work collaboratively in order to share good practice and improve pupil achievement. For example, together you are working to improve the subject knowledge of some of your teachers, especially in English and mathematics.

Consequently, teachers have greater confidence in teaching these subjects, improving pupil achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall

Her Majesty's Inspector