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7 March 2016

Satadru Ashton  
Headteacher  
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Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs Ashton

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Byron Wood Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 24 February 2016, 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 July 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At the section 5 inspection prior to the one that took place in July 2015, 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the school's improvement plans include sharper actions, success criteria, and milestones which are fully understood by those assigned to monitor and evaluate their impact.
- make sure there are focused actions to improve outcomes for most-able

pupils and that they are implemented without delay.

- ensure that the quality of pupils' learning and progress is given the highest priority when leaders are checking improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, and that this information is carefully cross-referenced with other evidence to gain an accurate view on the quality of teaching across the school.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and representatives of the interim executive board (IEB) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. In addition to this, I conducted a telephone meeting with a representative from the Learn Sheffield school improvement team. The school improvement plans and the school's system for checking pupil progress were evaluated. Other documents were scrutinised, including the outcomes of monitoring activities, local authority steering group minutes, reports written by you for the governing body and external reviews.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, 18 members of staff have left the school: two assistant headteachers, nine teachers and seven teaching assistants. A new deputy headteacher and inclusion manager have joined the leadership team, along with nine new teachers and 10 teaching assistants.

The governing body has been disbanded and an IEB has been put into place to oversee the strategic leadership and management of the school.

## **Main findings**

You, your members of staff, and members of the IEB, have a robust 'can do' attitude. You all have a strong desire and firm belief that Byron Wood can be, and will be, a good school. You are rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching in order to ensure that outcomes for all pupils are strengthened. Leaders demonstrate that they know what needs to be done and have identified some realistic and manageable actions in the school development plan to bring about improvement. While the actions are generally fit for purpose, they do need to be sharper so that governors can measure the impact of actions on pupils' progress in a timely manner. Furthermore, it is not consistently clear who is responsible for leading on the actions, and how they will be monitored and evaluated.

Capacity within the whole-school leadership team has been strengthened more recently through a planned programme of coaching and mentoring. This comes after a period of significant leadership turbulence following an unsuccessful school-

to-school support arrangement brokered by the local authority. The current support plan, driven astutely by the IEB, ensures that senior and middle leaders are being given clear support and training through a network of local support schools called the Locality B partnership. This ensures that they can develop fully into their role. Leaders are now correctly identifying opportunities for professional development, which is helping to address weaknesses in teaching. The development strategy applies both to individual members of staff requiring support and to whole-staff needs. It implements effectively new initiatives designed to improve standards.

External support for senior leaders from a local headteacher has enabled leaders to devise a robust and rigorous system for checking the quality of teaching and learning. Drop-ins, lesson observations, planning and book scrutinies, in addition to analysing information about pupil progress, are being used to identify where pupils and teachers may require support. An improved performance management system is now in place and teachers are being held to account for improving pupils' outcomes. Leaders now need to ensure that all checks on teaching are focused precisely on what pupils are learning, and that they triangulate their checks on teaching and learning to gain an accurate whole-school view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Leaders are improving the teaching of reading and writing. They have taken swift action to ensure that all teachers have the skills and knowledge to ensure that pupils improve their reading skills at the appropriate level through a carefully structured reading programme. In addition, individual support for teachers to develop pupils' skills in guided reading sessions has ensured that pupils are more enthusiastic about reading and that standards are improving. Leaders have also acted to provide refresher training and support to re-energise the recently implemented strategy to improve standards in writing. This has resulted in pupils having more opportunities to practise their skills at a much more challenging level, and they are doing this in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. However, there is still further work to be done to ensure that the most-able pupils are challenged even more, so that they can make accelerated progress from their higher starting points.

The quality of provision across the early years is improving. The early years leader has received good-quality support from the local authority to ensure that assessments are accurate and the progress children are making is tracked carefully, so that children can catch up quickly when necessary. This has resulted in more children achieving a good level of development than has been seen in previous years.

Although the IEB is still relatively new, its members have wasted no time in ensuring that they fully understand the needs and demands related to Byron Wood at this stage of its improvement journey. They are very clear in their view as to why

support failed to have the necessary impact in the past, and are determined not to make the same mistakes. Members are firmly rooted in providing support and challenge to rapidly improve the effectiveness of the school, which ultimately will benefit all of the pupils at Byron Wood. They have a deep understanding of the requirements and demands at this school, and are acutely aware that support needs to be tailored to meet the needs of this unique school. IEB members understand the need to monitor the work of the school closely, especially the impact of leadership at all levels. The IEB members are not afraid to challenge the school's leaders to ensure that improvements are realised. The IEB has some very skilled and experienced members, who have a clear understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning. As a result of this, they are well placed to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's work.

### **External support**

Previous support, brokered by the local authority, has had a detrimental impact on Byron Wood's journey in getting to good. Lessons need to be learned to ensure that this doesn't happen again.

Currently, the local authority is providing effective support to strengthen leadership in the early years. They have also put in place an IEB, which is now leading the school strategically and holding school leaders to account for their actions and impact. The IEB is ensuring that the current programme of support, which is mainly being provided through the Locality B partnership, is bespoke and tailored to meet the needs of this school. This support has started to have a positive impact on the quality of leadership in addition to the quality of teaching and learning.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Sheffield City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Lithgow

**Her Majesty's Inspector**