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David Sheppard  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Sheppard

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Prendergast Vale School**

Following my visit to your school on 4 July 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 December 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:

- ensure all teachers provide consistent, clear and simple feedback to pupils in line with the school's policy
- ensure that pupils' views are shared and that they understand the changes being made to improve behaviour in the school
- ensure greater consistency between teachers' expectations in the primary and secondary phases of the school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the senior leaders of the school, the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss

the actions taken since the last inspection. The inspector evaluated the school development plan, observed learning in lessons and spoke to pupils and staff informally around the school. A range of documents were scrutinised, which included information on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, school policies and procedures, and records of meetings. A number of short visits were undertaken jointly with leaders to lessons across the school.

## **Context**

Since the last section 5 inspection, a new visual and performing arts faculty leader and an inclusion manager have taken up post. The school has appointed a new substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher who will start in September 2016. The executive headteacher is currently leading the school.

## **Main findings**

Since the last inspection, you and the governing body have worked with drive to address the areas for improvement. The rate of the school's progress is reviewed with precision. New senior and middle leaders have been appointed and action has been taken to raise standards and expectations across the school.

You have drawn up a single plan aimed at improving the school and to address the key priorities from the last inspection. The plan shows who is responsible for delivering improvements and has measurable steps in place to maintain leaders' and governors' drive to improve the school.

You and your leadership team have made an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and wider areas for improvement. Your work to address matters with urgency, since your intervention as executive headteacher, has had a positive impact on improvements. Your determined action, supported by leaders and governors, has provided effective guidance to all staff about the work required to improve the school. Teaching staff now follow expected routines so that they focus on improving the outcomes of pupils.

Leaders' clear guidance and support has enabled staff to develop their approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers' planning is now better focused on the needs of pupils and the progress expected of them in the secondary phase. Planning identifies specific groups of pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged. The work seen in pupils' books shows a greater range of activities to meet the needs of pupils. The regular checking of teachers' work has driven this improvement. Faculty audits focus carefully on pupils' outcomes and their personal development, behaviour and welfare, not just the standard of teaching.

Leaders provide detailed feedback to teachers through their close monitoring. They set targets to improve teachers' performance. Any weaknesses in the standards of teaching are identified and support is offered to raise standards. Teachers' professional skills have been developed through working with colleagues across the federation and external subject consultants. For example, a review has been undertaken of the mathematics faculty to help middle leaders raise teachers' performance. Consequently, middle leaders are more confident in holding teachers to account. Therefore, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved. However, consistency in practice across all faculties is not yet secure. For example, feedback seen in some of the books of pupils was not in line with the school's policy, or lacked the clarity to enable pupils to understand how to improve their work.

During my visit to lessons with leaders, a few poorly kept books were seen. Leaders were rightly disappointed and agreed that some teachers' expectations were not high enough. Work in pupils' books showed that not all pupils are working at age-related expectations. This was particularly true of the most able pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 in English and mathematics. In these classes, while pupils overall make steady progress over time, expectations remain too low for some. Your leaders agree that this area requires a greater focus and continued drive. You and your leaders rightly gauge the performance of staff and the subjects they manage. Additional faculty audits have been undertaken to target those areas of the school that you have identified as requiring greater improvement.

Your current school information shows that the progress made by pupils in key stage 4 has improved since the last inspection. For example, the gap in performance between disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has narrowed in comparison with other pupils across the school. Furthermore, a greater proportion of pupils are expected to pass both GCSE English and mathematics. This has not made you complacent, as you understand the importance of the school's first set of GCSE results. Leaders are now focused on ensuring that the progress rate improves for those pupils currently in Year 10.

The primary phase continues to be a strength of the school. In 2015, 93% of pupils achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics. Current school information suggests that pupils in Year 6 are making effective progress in developing their reading, writing and mathematics skills. During my visit to the primary phase, the work in pupils' books seen in a Year 5 class included a range of technical writing skills, and vocabulary was used well to deepen understanding. Pupils visited in Year 1 described how their work had improved over time. One pupil proudly said, 'Visitor can I tell you what I am doing, I can use full stops now and look at sentences.'

You and your leadership team have recognised that raising attendance and reducing the number of exclusions is a priority. Leaders have undertaken significant work in

engaging with pupils and their families. Attendance has continued to improve since the previous inspection and is closer in line with national figures overall. Attendance is currently 95.4%. This increased figure is an indication of the action taken to promote regular attendance across the school.

Behaviour is improving. The number of behaviour incidents and the proportion of pupils who have received sanctions have reduced over time. For example, leaders' analysis shows that in the first half of the summer term, half as many pupils were required to be removed from lessons compared to the same period last year. This is a consequence of revised policies to manage classroom behaviour and effective support from the inclusion faculty. The number of exclusions has fallen compared with last year. However, leaders are clear that figures must continue to reduce. As a result, prefects have been introduced to gauge the voice of pupils and identify different strategies to help improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils.

Since the last inspection, an external review of governance has been completed. Governors have taken decisive action in changing the leadership and a greater urgency and determination exists to raise standards. They acknowledge that to support the school's rapid improvement, greater challenge is required. A scrutiny board has been introduced to ensure that link governors understand fully their responsibilities. Link governors have completed a number of visits since the inspection. They now have a sharper understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement so they can hold leaders to account. Governors have ensured that action to monitor the impact of the pupil premium is included in the school's plan. The externally commissioned pupil premium review will be completed during the first week in July.

### **External support**

The local authority has continued to challenge and support the school. It has provided expertise to assist leaders and governors in reviewing their work. The local authority representative attends the scrutiny panel and a number of reviews have been undertaken. For example, an external consultant has worked to develop the mathematics performance and the school improvement advisor has made regular visits to assess the performance of the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the London Borough of Lewisham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Lambern  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**