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Mr Jonathan Grover  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Grover

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Downsbrook Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 September 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 second 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.

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:

- set termly pupil progress targets against which governors can check progress and hold leaders to account.

**Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with senior leaders, four governors, including the acting chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection and my previous monitoring visit. I scrutinised documentation including the revised school development plan,

monitoring information, minutes of the governing body and visit reports provided by the local authority. Together we visited classes across all key stages and completed five lesson observations across key stages 1 and 2, during which I talked to pupils about their learning, while looking through their books.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been five changes to the teaching team. The senior leadership team has been reorganised to secure greater capacity, following the decision not to recruit a deputy headteacher. A school business manager has been appointed. The former chair of the governing body has left and the vice-chair is now acting chair.

## **Main findings**

You, your senior leadership team and the governors have responded very positively to what was a disappointing visit in March. Together you have significantly improved the effectiveness of leaders, who now work diligently together under the same vision. Consequently, you have brought about rapid improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils are making up lost ground in their learning.

Leaders' monitoring is now robust, timely and effective. You have sensibly reorganised which responsibilities are held by your assistant headteachers and made successful appointments to phase leader positions. Along with the appointment of a school business manager, this has helped to ensure that leaders are fully focused on pupils' learning across the school. Leaders check this in a number of useful and rigorous ways, such as the weekly learning walks and 'book looks'. Your evaluations are already more focused on how well pupils are learning. You use this assessment information well to analyse the achievement of key groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the difference in progress between boys and girls. It is important that you also analyse how well other key groups are learning. For example, you have not yet looked at how well different groups of boys, the most able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils are learning in the same depth.

Governors have provided appropriate and robust challenge to leaders. For example, they have increased the regularity of their visits and ensured that these have been highly focused on the areas for improvement identified in the previous report. Governors' meetings are similarly focused. They make good use of the information provided by leaders relating to the progress of the school.

The new development plan is clear and concise, which has helped ensure that everyone knows their role in moving the school forward. Appropriate actions have been planned and followed systematically to ensure that improvements have been rapid, but sustainable. Staff report that the new plan has helped give clarity about what has been needed to bring about the changes necessary to get the school to

good. Although the plan's targets and milestones are much sharper and easier to follow, they are not consistently linked to pupils' outcomes. This would help governors to have a sharper understanding of the difference being made to pupils' learning as the school improves.

Poor performance is now recognised more rapidly and is no longer tolerated. You have taken action, making difficult decisions when necessary. This has led to a significant change in the quality of teaching and learning, which is now much more consistent.

Teachers have responded very well to the raised expectations on them. There is now much greater consistency in teaching than at the time of the last monitoring inspection. For example, staff are now making more consistent use of the assessment and feedback policies you have introduced. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly committed to raising pupils' achievement. Consequently, the school team are now all pulling in the same direction to improve outcomes for pupils. You and your leadership team rightly acknowledge that there is still some way to go. However, because you accurately identify where strengths and weaknesses in practice can be found, the school is very well placed to continue to improve.

Teachers now have much higher expectations about what pupils can and should achieve. The standard of presentation, quality of work and quantity of coverage in books is now excellent. This is in stark contrast to the quality seen in March. Pupils say that they like the new expectations on them. They are clear that 'if we are not challenged, we are not learning enough'.

The greater consistency in the quality of teaching also means that there is now much greater consistency in the challenge offered to pupils in lessons, including the most able. This means that the pupils are beginning to make stronger progress from their starting points than has historically been the case. Although results at the end of key stage 2 were disappointing in 2016, assessment information about other cohorts is much more encouraging. For example, results in the early years and key stage 1 were broadly the same as, or better than, national figures. Assessment information about current key stage 2 cohorts suggests that they are on track to attain results at least in line with current national averages.

Pupils' writing remains a target for the school. Nevertheless, there are clear signs of improvement in the quality and quantity of writing that pupils are now producing. Pupils have responded particularly well to the celebration of their work that is now commonplace in display around the school. More could be made of opportunities to write across other subjects and to ensure that pupils apply the skills they learn in English.

Pupils are now given regular opportunities to explore mathematics. This has been seen consistently in the mathematics lessons observed. For example, in one lesson,

pupils were solving mathematical problems on magic squares. Of particular note was the excellent questioning by the teacher to encourage pupils to explain their own work and reason on a deeper level; for example, 'How did you come up with this?' and 'Tell me why that is true'.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided excellent support to the school since the last monitoring visit. The link adviser has monitored the work of leaders closely and in a timely fashion. This has helped ensure that leaders have focused their energy into the right actions at the right times. Successful strategies, such as the use of a consultant headteacher, have helped to rapidly improve the capacity of leadership within the school. Advisers for English, mathematics and the early years have helped to secure improved teaching. The link adviser has rightly recognised that the time is now right to reduce the support that has been given to the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**