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Mrs Sonia Allen  
Headteacher  
Hurst Hill Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Allen

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hurst Hill Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 19 July 2017, 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 April 2016. 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently strong in key stage 2
- make sure that boys read widely and often so that their reading skills improve
- ensure that reasoning skills are taught more effectively in mathematics
- ensure that provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is sharply focused on individual needs and is regularly monitored for impact.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the chief executive officer of the trust, five middle leaders, and members of the governing body, and I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I undertook a learning walk with you and observed behaviour at lunchtime. I evaluated the school's improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and notes from external support visits, including the external review of governance. I also analysed the quality of work in pupils' books and assessment information of pupils' current progress.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, you have been appointed as acting headteacher from your substantive post as deputy headteacher. There have also been other changes to the leadership and staff team. The school is converting to become an academy and joining a local multi-academy trust in the early part of autumn term 2017. Over the last few months, the chief executive officer of the trust and other trust staff have been working with the school. Furthermore, since the last inspection, the chair of governors has changed. The current chair is a national leader of governance.

## **Main findings**

You have successfully led the school through a period of instability, following changes in staffing in the spring term of 2017. Your transparent and supportive leadership has engendered a sense of purpose across staff and pupils. You and other leaders have developed a sense of urgency and responsibility for improvement. Consequently, many of the areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection have been addressed. Recently, you have worked effectively with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust that the school is joining. Her astute guidance offers further strength to the leadership of the school and, as a result of your recent work together, the pace of improvement has picked up even further.

You and other leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and plans for improvement are precise, time-specific and measurable for impact. You and the chief executive officer have worked with other staff to create an ambitious and relevant improvement plan for the next academic year. This plan, combined with the leaders' and governors' skills, demonstrates effective capacity for continued improvement.

Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior and middle leaders has become increasingly regular and developmental. This has enabled staff to receive relevant and useful feedback on their teaching, and the progress that pupils make. As a result, teaching has improved since the previous inspection. You have also ensured

that leaders and teachers are analysing assessment information more effectively. Regular moderation has secured accurate teacher assessment across the school. Leaders and teachers now have a clearer understanding of pupils' progress and where pupils need to go next in their learning. For example, disadvantaged pupils' progress has been boosted because they are now provided with more precise support.

Middle leaders are knowledgeable and they share your sense of drive to improve outcomes for pupils. They have a clear understanding of their roles and know the areas in which they have had greatest impact. Leadership in the early years and in key stage 1 has brought about improvements in outcomes for pupils. There has been a recent change to the leadership of special educational needs in the school. Leaders are currently reviewing the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and early actions are having a good impact. For example, there are improved links with specialist external services and there are clearer identification procedures for pupils who need additional support. However, you recognise that the provision for this group of pupils needs to be focused on individual needs and regularly monitored for impact.

You have secured improvements to the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Children in the early years are now choosing from a broader range of activities, which is supporting their independence. This has had noticeable impact in writing and, as a result, current assessment information shows that a higher proportion of pupils are achieving a good level of development than in the last academic year. You and I also looked at pupils' books in key stage 2 and some lessons in key stage 1. These activities indicated that the level of challenge has increased for pupils, particularly in key stage 1 and for the most able pupils. Your current assessment information shows that a larger proportion of pupils in key stage 1 have achieved the higher standards than last academic year. Pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics are not strong across the school and teachers need to provide high-quality opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical understanding through reasoning.

Improvements to teaching in key stage 2 have not been as consistent as in other parts of the school. The work in pupils' books shows a mixed picture of progress. Teaching in Year 6 is stronger and pupils' progress has been accelerated during this academic year. However, some classes have had temporary supply staff and where this has occurred, pupils' progress has slowed. You recognise that teaching needs to be consistently strong across key stage 2. Early actions in this area are positive and you have secured a full complement of permanent teaching staff for the new term in September.

You have developed an improved culture across the school for pupils to read more widely and often. However, this has not yet had the desired impact on the standard of boys' reading. Boys have not yet developed a love of reading and their skills in reading require improvement.

Governance has been strengthened since the previous inspection. The chair of governors provides strong guidance and support. He trains governors on specific areas of responsibility so that they can be self-sufficient and hold leaders to account on important aspects of school improvement. Consequently, governors know the school well and offer appropriate challenge and support. Governors now analyse assessment information far more robustly, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Additionally, governors have initiated several strategies to develop more effective partnerships with parents. This has ensured that the governance of the school is clearly connected to the community that it serves.

### **External support**

During the summer term of 2017, the chief executive of the multi-academy trust has been working closely with you on all aspects of school improvement. Other staff from the trust have also been used to support the school with moderation of assessment and with review of provision for special educational needs. This support has been very effective. It has boosted the rate of recent improvements and has also secured an ambitious plan for the future.

The local authority officers have provided some support to the school. They instigated the involvement of the new chair of governors and, in January 2017, officers also organised a teaching and learning review to check the progress the school had made since the previous inspection. The review played a critical role in enabling the school to move forward with greater purpose and clarity. Additional support has also been provided through an improvement adviser in the early years.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Meekin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**