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Mrs Lucie Buran  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Buran

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Radford Primary Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 14 September 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 October 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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- make sure that all pupils make good progress in reading by raising the profile of reading further and ensuring that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their reading
- ensure that there is sufficient challenge in learning for all key stage 1 pupils, particularly in mathematics
- improve the handwriting skills of pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, two assistant headteachers, the executive headteacher of the trust, the subject leader for mathematics, pupils and members of the governing body. The school improvement plan was evaluated, as were several other action plans. I visited most classes, reviewed pupils' work and scrutinised a range of documents including the outcomes of monitoring activities, governors' minutes and visit reports.

## **Context**

After the inspection in October 2016, one teacher left the school in January 2017 and was temporarily covered by a long-term supply teacher. A new teacher was appointed in May 2017. Another teacher was appointed on a part-time contract in January 2017 to strengthen practice across the early years. One new co-opted governor joined the governing body in the spring term 2017.

## **Main findings**

Since the last inspection, you and the two assistant headteachers have acted quickly to address the areas for development identified by inspectors. You have set a clear strategic direction for the school on its journey of improvement. Effectively supported by the assistant headteachers, you have implemented a raft of changes to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. You have worked successfully and in collaboration with others across the Sidney Stringer Trust to pinpoint the specific training needs of staff and provide them with the necessary guidance and support. You have created a culture of no excuses and an expectation that all pupils can achieve despite the external barriers to learning some face.

You have made an honest appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses and created a suitable improvement plan which relates directly to the areas for development identified at the last inspection. The most recent action plan has been formulated based on the findings from self-evaluation. Leaders and teachers carefully track and check pupils' progress on a regular basis. Half-termly progress meetings keep teachers focused on ensuring that pupils are targeted to make good progress. Most teachers use this information diagnostically to inform their planning and address pupils' gaps in knowledge and understanding. While there have been opportunities for joint planning, leaders do not routinely make checks on teachers' planning to see whether learning activities are pitched at the right level. During the learning walk, it was evident that some teachers, notably in key stage 1, had planned work which was too easy.

Leaders have been focused on ensuring that there is close monitoring of teaching. They check to make sure that teachers take heed of the advice given and adapt their practice accordingly. You have challenged any underperformance of teachers

and quickly eradicated any inadequate teaching. The improved quality of teaching, learning and assessment is having a positive impact on the progress of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. An external pupil premium review was completed in December and leaders have responded to all of the recommendations made. In light of these recommendations, you have made a number of changes, for example reorganising the timetable to maximise time for learning. As a result, the school's internal assessments show that the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school has diminished.

During the inspection, I visited classes across key stages 1 and 2. Where teaching is now more effective, teachers ask better, probing questions and ensure that learning builds successfully on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Teachers have benefited from a significant amount of training related to challenge which is making a difference. For example, teachers' questions are much more open ended and encourage pupils to explore their understanding in greater depth. While there has been work on raising the level of challenge in lessons, you recognise that there is still more to be done, particularly in key stage 1.

The subject leader for mathematics has been influential in bringing about improvements to the teaching of the subject. As a result, pupils in key stage 2 are more exposed to learning at greater depth over an extended period of time. There are also more opportunities for pupils to solve problems, although leaders recognise that pupils need to develop their mathematical reasoning skills further. Current work in the books of key stage 1 pupils indicates that there could be a greater level of challenge.

Leaders' evaluations and reports from external consultants show that the large majority of pupils now show good learning behaviours. I concur with these views. During visits to classrooms, pupils' levels of engagement, particularly in key stage 2, were high because learning captured their interest. Most pupils were keen to answer questions and they collaborated well in discussions. Teachers have spent time observing each other to see best practice in relation to behaviour and this has proved beneficial. Parents are informed about their children's 'behaviour for learning' on termly reports.

Governors hold leaders rigorously to account for the school's standards and performance. They undertake their own visits to the school to check the accuracy of the information provided. Governors request further information when necessary to make judgements about the progress made against action plans. They produce comprehensive visit reports which include challenging questions and responses from leaders. Minutes of meetings show that there is a sharp focus on learning and pupils' progress. Governors are reflective and keen to improve their practice further. More recently, they have become even sharper with their monitoring following a local authority governor audit which they commissioned.

You engage well with the multi-academy trust (MAT) which adds capacity to securing improvements in the quality of teaching at the school. This partnership work is proving effective, helping to develop new leaders and support teachers to improve. Staff value professional development opportunities and are supportive of your actions to bring about the necessary changes to practice. The MAT has ensured that there is an appropriate level of independent validation through commissioning external consultants. An external consultant has been commissioned to visit the school on a half-termly basis this academic year.

Last academic year, leaders recognised that some pupils were not reading often enough and put in place initiatives to increase opportunities for pupils to read to an adult. This strategy proved more successful in key stage 1. Leaders and governors were equally disappointed with the key stage 2 reading attainment for 2017 where fewer than half of the Year 6 pupils achieved the expected standard. However, you have already taken immediate measures to tackle this. New resources for reading have been purchased and these are very much welcomed by pupils. You took the decision to adopt a whole-class approach to guided reading which is providing some of the lower-attaining pupils with a much greater degree of challenge. However, during discussions with pupils, it was apparent that they were unclear about what they specifically needed to do to improve their reading ability, other than read more frequently.

Teachers' feedback in pupils' written work shows that almost all teachers adhere to the school's agreed marking policy. Leaders regularly monitor pupils' books, reinforcing expectations to ensure greater consistency in marking. In the wide range of books I reviewed, there was still too much variation in pupils' handwriting across the school. Pupils' handwriting in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 is often poorly formed and not joined. This hampers pupils' progress in writing. Pupils' general presentation across the school is improving.

### **External support**

The local authority has carried out one monitoring visit since the school was judged as 'requires improvement'. There has been no further support from the local authority since this time.

The school commissions the support of an independent mathematics consultant to support the subject leader. This has enabled the leader to strengthen his leadership and management skills. You also work with a phonics consultant on a termly basis and have received advice from an early years consultant. Staff take heed of the advice and recommendations which have contributed to improved teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**