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Miss Claire Joyce
Acting Headteacher
Beech Grove Primary School
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Dear Miss Joyce

Short inspection of Beech Grove Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in June 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Standards of teaching and behaviour and pupils' outcomes in writing and mathematics declined for a period following the previous inspection. Staff morale fell and parents and carers raised concerns about the quality of education at the school. Since your appointment, you have worked tirelessly alongside the acting deputy headteacher to redress shortcomings. Parents and staff recognise the positive changes you have made to arrest any further decline and they fully support your work. Your systematic approach is ensuring that more pupils are receiving good teaching. You are using the high-quality teaching that exists in the school as an effective model for other teachers.

During my visit, you were quick to pinpoint precise areas that need improvement. Your records illustrate that your evaluations are sharp and precise. You are using the findings to inform well-constructed action plans and linking these to individual training for staff. Your actions are leading to better teaching and learning, but you are aware much more improvement is needed.

You acknowledge that the school was too slow to establish new ways of assessing pupils' learning to accompany the introduction of the new national curriculum in 2014. Until recently, teachers did not understand the subject knowledge they needed for the new, raised requirements. Teachers did not use information on the

attainment and progress of each individual pupil to analyse pupils' achievements across the school and plan for their next steps in learning. Therefore, until recently, teachers did not identify clearly enough pupils' areas of strength and those areas in which pupils still need to improve. You agree a need for a sharper focus on how far you expect different groups of pupils to have progressed at set milestones in the year.

You undertook a review of what went wrong, following a dip in pupils' performance in 2017. You and your acting deputy headteacher have implemented fundamental systems and processes needed to make teachers accountable for their performance and to raise the quality of teaching and learning. You, personally, are benefiting from training, coaching and mentoring by an experienced headteacher providing consultancy support. Your actions are resulting in improvements in provision and pupils' achievements. The progress of an increasing number of pupils is now improving; the progress of disadvantaged pupils is also benefiting equally.

Following a thorough review of the impact of pupil premium spending, staff share your vision of what you want to achieve as a school. Teaching is therefore becoming characterised by higher expectations, stronger relationships with pupils and happier, more productive classroom environments. Disadvantaged pupils are making stronger gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving, although many remain too passive in their approach. They are starting to be more resilient when faced with trickier tasks and more reflective about what they have learned. In addition, the progress of middle- and lower-attaining pupils in key stage 2, which was too slow last year, is also becoming quicker.

Safeguarding is effective.

All involved in the school community are committed to keeping pupils safe. You make sure all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who wish to work with children are suitable. Training for safeguarding and child protection is up to date, regular and welcomed, enabling staff and governors to discharge fully their duties. Pupils are confident that any concerns they have are followed up and they are knowledgeable about matters of safety. This is because, for example, you use routine activities, such as walking into the town centre, to reinforce aspects of road safety.

Your strong emphasis on pupils' personal development encourages their positive behaviour, with respect and courtesy as the norm. Should pupils display any inappropriate behaviour, staff have been trained to use the school's well-established procedures to deal with any incidents safely. Links with outside agencies to cater for vulnerable pupils are good. You demonstrated your strong commitment to pupils' safety through your prompt and effective action last term to improve further the already adequate security of the school site. You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused on how well middle- and higher-ability pupils are progressing in mathematics and reading. We also examined how well disadvantaged pupils are performing in writing. Finally, we explored pupils' behaviour.
- You carried out a thorough analysis following disappointing mathematics achievement in 2017. This is resulting in a culture shift at the school. Training for staff and a new approach to developing pupils' mathematics skills are starting to bear fruit. Some pupils are starting to think more deeply and explain their mathematical reasoning. For example, Year 6 pupils explain their understanding of the relationship between fractions and decimals and the link to percentages. Pupils confidently tackle questions that challenge assumptions, such as '6 divided by $\frac{1}{2} = 3$ ', and provide a deep explanation of why this is so. This type of questioning is becoming a more regular feature of everyday mathematics work in pupils' books.
- In other instances, teachers' weaker subject knowledge of mathematics is leading to work that lacks sufficient challenge or is too repetitive. Pupils report that where this is the case, teaching is not inspiring or motivating and their progress falters.
- You implemented several new approaches to the teaching of mathematics last term. Your mathematics leader has observed teaching, scrutinised pupils' work and discussed pupils' progress with teachers. To date, these monitoring activities have focused on how well staff have applied knowledge they gained from recent training to improve the overall quality of their teaching. However, monitoring has not yet focused on the learning and progress made by different groups of pupils.
- At the time of the previous inspection, you were challenged with ensuring that teaching assistants play a full role in supporting pupils' learning. You are successfully dealing with this issue. For example, you deploy teaching assistants well to support those pupils who need to catch up with their knowledge of phonics. This approach is effective in supplementing the new whole-school system for teaching synthetic phonics. Consequently, almost all pupils are on track to meet the standards expected in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- At other times, the teaching of phonics lacks precision and teachers do not notice when pupils pronounce sounds incorrectly. Pupils lack confidence when segmenting sounds to spell more complex words. On occasions, their poor letter formation and presentation leads to spelling errors that teachers do not address.
- Teachers place insufficient emphasis on the ability of older children to understand what they are reading. Activities that help pupils to analyse successfully the meaning and technical aspects of texts, such as poetic devices, are too simplistic and therefore lack challenge.
- Disadvantaged pupils make stronger progress in writing when the teaching of technical aspects of language takes place alongside the approach you favour of using high-quality fiction and non-fiction texts. For example, in Year 6, pupils use their good subject knowledge to explore issues and themes in depth. Pupils

become confident in explaining the impact of word, sentence and punctuation choices on the reader and make good progress.

- In other year groups, activities sometimes lack purpose or clarity. Lessons appear to be 'one-off' sessions that do not build on pupils' prior knowledge, skills or understanding. Teachers' weak subject knowledge results in activities that do not meet the needs of pupils well enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The quality and consistency of teaching improve to match the best in the school by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge and ensuring that they use it to plan activities that build effectively on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding
 - ensuring that the teaching of phonics is technically precise, and that suitable activities help older pupils develop their comprehension skills more fully.
- The quality of leadership and management improves by:
 - ensuring that monitoring places a sharper focus on the progress of groups
 - using the findings from monitoring effectively to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so they can play a greater part in securing improvement
 - governors holding leaders firmly to account for the progress pupils make.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the acting deputy headteacher and the leaders for English and mathematics. Six members of the governing body, including the chair, met me to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. The views of a number of parents were gathered through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I carried out visits to classrooms jointly with you to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, to

review the quality of pupils' work over time, to listen to pupils read and also to talk informally with them about their experiences of school. I evaluated a range of documentary evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and governance. I met with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6.