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Mrs Katherine Roberts  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Roberts

### **Short inspection of Moorlands Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 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.**

Since your appointment as headteacher in the summer term of 2017, you have wasted no time in carrying out an audit of the school's work in order to identify weaknesses and barriers to pupils' achievement. In a very short time, you have taken prompt and effective action to rectify a number of shortcomings in the school's provision. You have also had to manage a period of significant staffing upheaval, including the sad loss of an experienced senior leader. However, despite these difficult times, you are working hard to get the school back on track. The large majority of staff, parents and carers welcome the improvements that you are making, and recognise the positive benefits that these changes are starting to bring. One comment on the staff survey noted, 'Moorlands has developed, improved and been driven forwards over the last term by the [new] headteacher.'

Following the recent appointment of a new chair and vice-chair of the governing body, governance is strengthening. Governors are passionate and committed to their role; they recognise what is going well and what needs to be better. Governors are now more visible in school and are knowledgeable about the school's curriculum priorities and the current changes being implemented. You have already commissioned a review of governance for later this term in order to fully evaluate the effectiveness of governance.

The good progress pupils were making at the time of the last inspection has not been maintained across the school. This is particularly the case in key stage 1, where some pupils do not make enough progress, especially in reading and mathematics. However, leaders' actions to accelerate rates of progress in key stage 2 have been more successful, notably in mathematics. In this subject, pupils have made above average progress for the last two years.

Following the last inspection, leaders were tasked with raising the achievement of the most able pupils. It is only recently that leaders have begun to make headway in accomplishing this goal. At present, too few pupils, in all key stages, go on to attain the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. You have responded quickly with a determined focus on raising teachers' expectations about pupils' work, providing clear guidance to teachers about effective questioning and matching tasks closely to pupils' needs. This is already beginning to improve teaching.

Some of the less favourable outcomes are clearly attributed to the variation in the quality of teaching. Where teaching is most effective, it is lively and engaging, characterised by the teacher's clear explanations and a suitable level of challenge for all pupils. However, in some instances, teaching lacks rigour and pupils do not achieve as well as they could. You check on the quality of teaching regularly and provide helpful guidance to teachers on what they need to do to improve their practice. You have also arranged for staff to visit other local schools to see good practice. This is helping teachers to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve.

You acknowledge that some of the other areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection still require further attention. For example, the most able pupils are still sometimes given work which is too easy. The revised school development plan, which accurately identifies the school's priorities, incorporates these previous priority areas. Among leaders and staff, there is a real sense of drive, energy and determination to succeed and address the school's current weaknesses. Your view that 'the final destination is a distance away' is accurate. However, that distance is reducing at pace.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say their favourite aspects of school are 'learning, their friends and the teachers'. Their attendance is improving and is currently broadly in line with the national average. Pupils get along well together, show respect for each other and behave well. The school is a welcoming, supportive community where pupils are happy and develop strong moral values.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and the staff give high priority to ensuring that pupils are safe. Last term, you commissioned a consultant to review all aspects of safeguarding processes. You have already acted on and addressed all recommendations from this review to further improve practice. All staff I spoke to demonstrated a good knowledge of safeguarding procedures and familiarity with the school's expectations about

reporting concerns. Staff are vigilant and well trained to spot any indicators of abuse.

You work closely with a range of external partners, including the police and social services, to strengthen the school's culture of safeguarding. You are persistent in your efforts to make certain that other agencies take the necessary action to protect vulnerable children. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors make sure that stringent checks are made on prospective staff to ensure their suitability to work with children.

The pupils' safeguarding knowledge is impressive. This is because they experience a range of practical workshops in school which educate them about personal safety. For example, pupils spoke confidently about using their mobile phone safely so not to become a victim of robbery. These sessions are beneficial. You know this because you ask pupils to evaluate their personal, social and health education lessons to determine how successful they have been in changing attitudes or behaviour.

### **Inspection findings**

- Some, but not all, aspects of the teaching of reading are good. For example, teachers develop pupils' early reading skills well, including their phonic knowledge. With the exception of 2017, when there was a dip in results, the proportion of Year 1 pupils passing the phonics screening check is typically in line with the national average. Current pupils are more effectively targeted in phonics so any gaps in their knowledge are addressed quickly.
- While new approaches to the teaching of reading comprehension skills are proving successful, there are still too many pupils who have not developed a sufficient level of fluency when reading age-appropriate books. This inability to read fluently hampers their progress in reading, preventing them from reading accurately at speed.
- Pupils have mixed attitudes towards reading. Not enough pupils are yet enthusiastic readers who recognise the benefits and enjoyment that reading brings. However, there has been a concerted effort on the part of leaders to promote a love of reading more widely, although the impact of this has yet to be fully realised.
- You have been instrumental in developing the role of middle leaders, coaching them so they can enhance their leadership skills and monitor teaching effectively. Consequently, middle leaders are just beginning to take a greater role in developing the quality of teaching and learning beyond their own classrooms. They have a growing understanding of what whole-school assessment information is telling them about standards across school, although they are not yet having an obvious impact on raising achievement across the school.
- From broadly average starting points on entering Year 1, pupils' progress throughout key stage 1 is patchy. This means that not enough pupils go on to

attain at greater depth, including the most able pupils.

- In 2016, there were no pupils in key stage 1 who attained at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, there was some improvement, although the proportion of pupils remained relatively low in comparison to national figures. The most able pupils spend too much time consolidating work they have already grasped and do not move on quickly enough to harder work. This is especially the case in mathematics.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching and learning is consistently strong across the school, particularly in key stage 1
- teachers challenge the most able pupils in their learning so they make better progress and attain the higher standards of which they are capable
- teachers more effectively support pupils to develop their fluency in order to improve outcomes in reading
- middle leaders are supported to extend their skills and knowledge so they can contribute more fully to raising achievement across 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 Sandwell. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you about the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding and the school development plan. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with the subject leaders for English and mathematics. I asked several staff, including lunchtime supervisors, about how they keep pupils safe. I spoke on the telephone with the local authority school improvement adviser. I visited lessons in all classes with you and looked at the work in a selection of pupils' books. I met with a group of key stage 2 pupils and talked informally to others about their work. I listened to several pupils read. I evaluated a wide range of documents, including the school's development plan, the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, governors' minutes of meetings and documentation related to safeguarding. The views of parents were considered. There were insufficient responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, in order to draw any conclusions. There were four free-text comments. I took into account the school's own recent parent survey results.