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Mr Mark Sherwin-Peddie  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Sherwin-Peddie

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Beechwood Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 September 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

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 good.

The school should take further action to:

- work more closely with parents and carers to ensure that they all understand the importance of their children coming to school regularly, and the impact that missing school can have on their children's progress and potentially on the progress of other learners
- continue to fine-tune the content of the wider curriculum, to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the key knowledge that children should learn and remember in each topic and in each year group
- ensure that plans to sharpen assessment in wider curriculum subjects are implemented in full, as soon as possible.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, three members of the governing body (including the vice-chair), and senior leaders and teachers. A telephone conversation was held with the chair of the governing body. I spoke informally with parents as they brought their children to school, and with pupils as I visited lessons. The focus of the discussions was around the actions taken and progress made since the previous inspection. You, and members of your senior leadership team, accompanied me on a tour of the school. We made short visits to classrooms, where we observed pupils undertaking a range of activities and looked at work in their books. I evaluated a wide range of documents, including the latest school development plan, your updated information on pupils' attainment and progress, your self-evaluation of the work of the school, minutes of meetings held with representatives of the local authority and notes of their visits, and the minutes of the latest meetings of the governing body.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection in May 2017, an assistant headteacher has returned from maternity leave and an acting assistant headteacher has left the school. A new assistant headteacher for inclusion has been appointed and five newly qualified teachers have joined the school.

## **Main findings**

There are strong signs of improvement in the school since the last inspection in May 2017. You are determined to improve standards and you are strong in your resolve to heighten expectations across the school. You have ensured that members of your senior team of leaders work well together and are clear about their roles. They have drawn up clear improvement plans. These measures, together with the hard work of teachers and support staff, have ensured that good progress has been made to tackle most of the areas identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection.

The quality of teaching is improving. This is because teachers and other staff have adopted much sharper systems to check on the progress that pupils are making. They then skilfully adapt their teaching to plug any gaps in learning that they identify. Staff check for gaps in learning effectively within lessons, through careful questioning and observations of pupils' work, and also over time through careful monitoring of work and assessment information. Systems to check pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics are particularly sophisticated, and provide teachers and leaders with all the information they need. However, systems to check on pupils' progress in other subjects in the curriculum are less well developed. Leaders have identified a system for the ways in which they would like to check on pupils' progress in these subjects, but they are not embedded across the school. We discussed the importance of you making sure that these systems are adopted fully by staff as soon as possible. This will help to support better quality teaching in subjects other than reading, writing and

mathematics.

You have worked hard, and have effectively drawn from external support, to improve the quality of the curriculum in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics. For example, the content of the curriculum in history and geography has been modified to make learning more relevant for pupils. There remains work to be done, though, to ensure that all staff are clear about the key knowledge that pupils should learn, and remember over time, in different year groups and subjects.

You have successfully ensured that newly qualified teachers have been well supported. Consequently, they are developing well and appreciate the opportunities to observe more experienced members of staff to support their own development. Newly qualified teachers and other members of staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's expectations in relation to keeping children safe.

Unconfirmed outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 indicate that pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics continues to accelerate. There is a slight dip from 2017 in the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, despite pupils making better progress from their starting points. However, standards in writing and mathematics are higher than in 2017. There is an overall trend of improvement, including for disadvantaged pupils. Outcomes in the spelling, punctuation and grammar test at the end of Year 6 are particularly impressive. Pupils' progress and outcomes in key stage 1 also continue to improve from 2017. Work in pupils' books, which I scrutinised during my monitoring visit, fits with the picture of a school in which progress is accelerating. I paid particular attention in my work scrutinies to the most able pupils and those who are new to the English language. Leaders and teachers pay significant attention to the development of pupils' vocabulary. Pupils' books show that this is beginning to bear fruit in the written work of those new to the English language. Although not a key focus for this monitoring visit, there are signs that standards and the quality of provision in early years have been maintained since the previous inspection.

You have made well-considered decisions to support leaders to focus on their areas of responsibility more effectively. For example, you have ensured that your new assistant headteacher for inclusion has some extra support with certain tasks, in the context of such a large school. This enables her to focus the majority of her time directly on the oversight of teaching and learning for the pupils for whom she is responsible. Other leaders also have sufficient time for strategic oversight, and balance this well with teaching commitments. These factors combine to help ensure that the school continues to move forward and improve.

Despite the improvements you are making, and the significant efforts you are making to plug gaps in pupils' learning, you are faced with a barrier. Unless this barrier is overcome, pupils will not make the progress they should. This barrier is the much higher than average level of pupils' persistent absence. As a consequence, the overall attendance rate of pupils is below the national average for primary schools. During my

visit, we discussed and agreed that more work needs to be done to emphasise the importance of regular pupil attendance to parents. No matter how effective teaching is, if children do not attend school regularly, they will not make the progress they should. There are some signs of improvement in pupils' attendance figures, but not enough to make a significant difference to their learning outcomes.

Governors continue to maintain effective strategic oversight of the school. This is supported well through a school improvement plan that identifies the areas of responsibility assigned to individual governors. The plan links closely to the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. The improved quality of assessment information that governors receive is further helping them to challenge leaders to improve. For example, governors have challenged leaders about the historic progress of the current Year 6 cohort. Governors also challenge representatives of the local authority well to ensure that the support they receive is tailored to their needs, and those of the school overall.

You and your leaders are well placed to continue to improve the school. As we discussed, it is imperative that the strong momentum of improvement is maintained, up to and beyond the time of the next inspection.

### **External support**

You have received effective support and challenge from the local authority since the time of the last inspection. The support has included guidance for leaders in English and mathematics, moderation of leaders' assessments, and half-termly 'school improvement group' meetings with senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and local authority representatives. As a result of this support, leaders have gained confidence in their approaches, and have been energised to explore new ideas. This has particularly been the case for ideas related to the development of pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills.

You also work effectively with other schools and partners within, and beyond, the local community. For example, you have worked very effectively with a school in Slough to refine strategies to develop pupils' writing skills.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**