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25 October 2018

Mrs Katharine Buckley  
Executive Headteacher  
Priory Lane Community School  
Priory Lane  
Scunthorpe  
Lincolnshire  
DN17 1HE

Dear Mrs Buckley

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Priory Lane Community School**

Following my visit to your school on 2 October 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. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in June 2017, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- work swiftly to ensure pupils receive consistently good teaching across the school
- ensure timely support is provided to enable low prior attaining pupils to achieve well.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, your chair of governors and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The post-Ofsted development plan was evaluated, and other documentation was

scrutinised. I met with pupils representing all age groups and talked to pupils at playtime and lunchtime. I accompanied you on a walk around school, visiting all classes.

## **Context**

The head of school is currently on secondment to another school and the assistant headteacher is acting head of school. Since the last inspection, five teachers have left the school and have been replaced by one newly qualified teacher, one recently qualified teacher and three experienced teachers. A newly qualified teacher was recruited to teach Year 6 but did not complete the year due to personal circumstances. Her role was filled by a part-time supply teacher and the acting head of school. You have recruited an additional teacher to one year group to enable an effective handover prior to the start of a maternity leave.

## **Main findings**

You are determined that pupils will achieve and have been rigorous in tackling underperformance in teaching. Senior leaders have been quick to act to support teachers to secure their subject knowledge. They have a good track record now of helping teachers to improve. Recruiting new staff to the school has been difficult but you are now confident that you have the right staff in place to take the school forward. You and your senior leaders have carefully devised the school improvement plan to focus on the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Targets included in the plan are challenging and measurable. You have been realistic in evaluating the school's progress towards meeting the targets and acknowledge there is still some way to go to achieve them.

You have successfully developed middle leaders, particularly in mathematics and English, and they are regularly involved in monitoring the quality of learning. Middle leaders have been offered training and guidance from the local authority to further develop their ability to lead in their subjects. The leader for mathematics has strong subject knowledge and can articulate accurately the strengths and weaknesses in mathematics teaching across the school.

In 2018, at the end of the Reception Year, just over half the children achieved a good level of development. Teachers have supported children well to develop the characteristics for learning needed to make a strong start in learning. This cohort arrived in school with skills well below those typically seen and some children have struggled to acquire the basic skills that are needed to help them get a good start in Year 1.

You have had success in improving learning in key stage 1. A higher proportion of pupils attained the expected standard in the phonics screening check than previously. This is due to greater consistency in the teaching of phonics, and the early identification of pupils who have benefited from timely additional teaching to

help them learn those sounds that others in class have mastered earlier. This has resulted in almost all pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 2. In 2017, outcomes at the end of key stage 1 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2018, Year 2 pupils, despite low starting points, attained standards broadly in line with the national average figures in writing and mathematics and were slightly below average in reading. Disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 achieved much better than in previous years.

At the end of key stage 2, there was a 6% improvement in the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined. However, just over half of pupils attained this standard and just under a third of disadvantaged pupils achieved it. Your records show that a large group of pupils joined the school during Year 5 and Year 6, many of whom needed support to manage difficult social and emotional issues, which meant they were hindered in attaining the expected standards. Consequently, while pupils who had been with the school for some time achieved well, a good number of those joining late did not manage to make steady progress.

Leaders are confident that current pupils are much better placed to attain the expected standards at all key stages by the end of this academic year. Disadvantaged pupils are outperforming other pupils in most classes, apart from in Year 6. Work in pupils' books and teachers' assessment information support this assertion. Overall, pupils are presenting their work well and demonstrating they have understood their teachers' instructions and are completing work to a fair standard. Leaders have supported teachers in sharpening their planning so that pupils are no longer repeating work unnecessarily. I was able to observe work at standards appropriate for pupils' ages in most classes across the school. However, in some classes, the quality of pupils' work remains variable.

Leaders have worked to good effect to develop the curriculum in mathematics. The leader is enthusiastic and knowledgeable and, under the guidance of senior leaders, has used the information gleaned from regular monitoring to offer support where teaching has been less successful. I was able to observe places in school where books showed teachers' planning has effectively considered pupils' prior knowledge and provided pupils with the 'building blocks' to acquire new skills. Teachers are successfully preparing most pupils to apply their arithmetic skills to mathematics investigations. However, in a few classes, teachers have not ensured that pupils have basic understanding, nor have they planned appropriately to enable pupils to build on their prior learning, so low prior attaining pupils are struggling to keep up.

You have ensured that safeguarding records relating to visitors to school and the recruitment of staff are up to date and checked regularly. The family liaison officer is sensitive to the needs of vulnerable families and provides effective support to individual pupils in school, so they can be included in their class and participate in learning at the right level for them. He works closely with the attendance officer to help pupils attend school regularly. As a result of their work, attendance has

improved and is now broadly in line with the national average. The persistent absence figure last year was much reduced and fell below the national average.

### **External support**

Effective challenge from the local authority has enabled governors and school leaders to look very closely at school assessment information, to analyse it and to put into place actions to address any areas of weakness. Governors receive accurate information from the local authority and attend regular meetings held by the local authority to probe the school's effectiveness.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher

**Her Majesty's Inspector**