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Georgina Beaven  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Beaven

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

Following my visit to your school on 28 March 2019, 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 judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in January 2018, 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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- embed new systems designed to raise attainment in reading for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able
- raise teachers' expectations in science and across the wider curriculum by ensuring that curriculum planning has a better focus on the sequence of key knowledge and skills over time

- refine the quality and precision of improvement planning at all levels to enable governors and leaders new to their roles to be sharper in their monitoring of the impact of new initiatives.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, middle leaders, and representatives of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plans were evaluated. Together with senior leaders, I made short visits to classrooms in early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2, and reviewed a sample of work in pupils' books. I met with a small group of pupils and held conversations with a number of parents at the beginning of the school day.

## **Context**

Five teachers have left the school and four have joined since the previous inspection in January 2018. In addition, the school has restructured the arrangements for support staff, rearranging the numbers and roles of teaching assistants. A new chair of governors has been appointed who has wasted no time in restructuring the governing body. However, there are still some vacancies on the governing body. You are leaving the school at the end of this term. Governors have worked with the local authority to restructure the senior and middle leadership team which has supported you to improve teaching and learning across the school and looks set to ensure continuity next term.

## **Main findings**

Governors and the senior team have responded professionally to the outcome of the previous inspection and have shown determination and drive to improve the school. Leaders have redesigned their action plans to address the areas for improvement that were identified, and they are carrying them out carefully. These plans have helped middle leaders and teachers to engage with addressing the whole-school priorities. However, there is a need to refine the level of detail in these plans. Senior leaders have not identified specific, measurable milestones which governors can then use to monitor and review the impact of the range of new initiatives and training for staff that have been introduced.

Since September, the restructured governing body has worked well with the new adviser from the local authority and the extended senior leadership team to accelerate the pace of change in the school. You have applied a greater degree of urgency to address your targets for more consistently high-quality teaching and to improve pupils' outcomes. As a team, senior leaders have constructively challenged targeted areas of underperformance and have raised standards. Staff morale is high. Proud of the improvements that they have made recently, many teachers were keen to share additional exemplars of pupils' work with me during this

inspection.

Senior leaders have been proactive, liaising with the local authority and other local schools to secure a raft of suitable support for leadership and teaching. In addition, you regularly work with other schools in the area to moderate pupils' work in English and mathematics. Consequently, subject leaders and teachers are gaining confidence in their use of assessment. New leaders have enhanced the systems for supporting the academic progress of disadvantaged pupils this year and there are encouraging signs of improvement as a result.

Outcomes in early years improved significantly in 2018, and a high proportion of children achieved a good level of development by the end of Reception Year. Our visits to Reception classes showed that strong relationships, together with stimulating resources and activities, are used to good effect to encourage children to engage in writing and make strong progress in their number skills.

Better teaching of phonics has supported improvements in pupils' outcomes in the phonics screening check, so that achievement is now broadly in line with national averages. Published progress information from the national tests at the end of key stage 2 identifies that the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in writing and mathematics were broadly in line with national averages. However, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard in reading this year was particularly low. Too few pupils achieved the higher standard in reading or writing. Continued priority needs to be given to improving pupils' reading and writing skills during key stage 2, particularly in respect of the most able.

Regular training has supported improvements to teaching, and teachers are now more consistent in giving pupils feedback on their work, in line with the school policy. This means that most pupils receive regular advice on how to refine and improve their work. This year, pupils' books show that they regularly refine, edit and improve their work in English. This has enabled pupils to make better progress in their writing skills more recently than they had done previously. Leaders have identified that improving pupils' vocabulary, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils, is key to improving their reading and writing skills, and they have implemented a clear drive to achieve this in English. Reading is now better promoted through the recent introduction of the accelerated reader and reciprocal reading approaches. These fresh approaches are clearly motivating and enthusing the pupils to read, but more time is needed to embed this work and facilitate long-term improvements in pupils' reading skills.

In lessons, most teaching assistants offer constructive and supportive challenge for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who need to catch up. Leaders have recently devised suitable plans for the spending of the pupil premium to address the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils and improve their outcomes. The school's pastoral support and the range of enrichment activities offered to disadvantaged pupils continue to be a strength. In addition, this year

senior leaders have restructured provision, enabling teachers to offer bespoke intervention and support to help meet the needs of this group. Leaders' monitoring is showing that disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress than they have done in the past.

Strong relationships between staff and pupils support effective learning environments in most classrooms. The atmosphere is warm and cooperative. The introduction of a new house system and the school's new core values have been successful in motivating pupils and creating a buzz of enthusiasm and teamwork. Pupils confidently welcome visitors and are happy to explain their work. Effective behaviour policies ensure that conduct around the school is calm, and that children respect each other and are keen to learn. British values are promoted well so that pupils develop a keen sense of equality and fair play. Parents and pupils report that, although teasing and some bullying does occasionally happen, they trust staff to resolve any concerns that pupils may have. Pupils told me that they are proud of their school and value the friendships that they make here.

The small but committed team of governors knows the context of the school and its key areas of strength and weakness well. Governors are actively seeking new recruits to fill their numbers, and they are driven to ensure that the school becomes the primary school of choice in the locality. Governors are clearly determined to support leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They understand their role in challenging improvements. Leaders ensure that governors are informed with appropriate information from regular assessment points throughout the year. However, governors do not have a sufficiently accurate analysis of progress, or access to more specific and detailed improvement planning. They are therefore unable to challenge leaders effectively regarding the impact of their initiatives to improve the quality of teaching across the curriculum.

### **External support**

This year, senior leaders and governors have worked closely and constructively with the local authority. The local authority has offered training and support to increase the capacity of your senior leadership team. Well established plans are in place to enable your deputy headteachers to take over the running of the school in the interim after you leave at Easter. Currently, governors and the local authority are exploring all options for the future long-term leadership of the school.

Working in partnership with local schools you have ensured that subject leaders have gained regular and appropriate training and support. Consequently, the leaders of English, mathematics and the wider curriculum are clear on their roles and the further improvements to teaching and learning that are still required in their subject areas. Leaders continue to focus on improving day-to-day teaching and are using a programme of visits to lessons and reviews of pupils' work to monitor this across the school. Where weaknesses in teaching have been identified, leaders devise and offer suitable support.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry

**Her Majesty's Inspector**