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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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14 December 2022

Kim Wills  
Acting Headteacher  
Newtown Primary School  
Clifton Road  
Exeter  
Devon  
EX1 2BP

Dear Miss Wills

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Newtown Primary School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 13 December 2022, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other leaders, staff, governors and the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with a group of pupils and scrutinised curriculum documents and the school development plan. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Newtown Primary School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.**

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all staff have strong subject knowledge in the subjects they teach
- ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language sufficiently well so that these pupils learn all the subject content they should.

## **Main findings**

There have been considerable staff changes, including at leadership level, since the previous full inspection. Governors are working productively to secure permanent leadership for the school. There is a full-time acting headteacher. An executive headteacher also oversees the work of the acting headteacher one day per week. Both the acting headteacher and executive headteacher are seconded from the Academies for Character and Excellence (ACE) multi-academy trust in Totnes. A new leader of SEND and two new teachers took up their roles in September 2022. Three teachers have left. Further changes to staffing are imminent in January 2023. One governor has left. One governor has joined the governing board.

Over time, there have been steady improvements to the quality of education pupils receive, including in the early years. Since September 2022, leaders' work to raise staff expectations of what pupils in all classes will know and understand is making a demonstrable difference. Staff value the comprehensive training, support and coaching they are receiving, including when planning sequences of work. Leaders check the curriculum that staff implement. This means that the school-wide teaching approaches that leaders expect to be in place are. For example, staff break down sequences of work into small chunks of learning. This is helping pupils to learn, know and remember much more in reading, writing and mathematics. Nonetheless, leaders' plans to improve the implementation of the wider curriculum are at an earlier stage. There are inconsistencies in staff's subject knowledge in some subjects. It is too soon to see school-wide improvements in every curriculum subject yet.

Recently, leaders are supporting staff in identifying the needs of pupils with SEND and those pupils who speak English as an additional language with greater accuracy. However, there remain inconsistencies in how well staff use the information they have to shape curriculum content. This holds some of these pupils back from learning everything they could. Leaders' work to ensure that staff show fidelity to the school's agreed approach to teaching early reading is paying off. As a result, more pupils at the early stages of reading are keeping up with the phonics programme this year. However, leaders accurately identify that some staff do not deal with pupils' misconceptions swiftly enough.

Leaders' and staff's emphasis on pupils demonstrating positive learning behaviours in lessons is proving effective. Pupils work hard in lessons and keep at their learning. Lessons are rarely interrupted. Pupils feel safe in school. A new behaviour policy is going into place. Nonetheless, some pupils say that some unkind behaviour at lunchtime still happens and staff do not always resolve it promptly.

Governors work closely with Devon local authority and the ACE multi-academy trust. They are using the actions from a range of external audits to hold leaders to account. For example, they have been stringent in ensuring the strengthening of the culture of safeguarding. Staff have been retrained. Staff understand and apply the school's agreed safeguarding policies and procedures effectively. Increasingly, governors are using their

meetings with external partners to assure themselves that the quality of education is improving swiftly.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington  
**His Majesty's Inspector**