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19 May 2023

Dave Hill  
Headteacher  
Widden Primary School  
Sinope Street  
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Gloucestershire  
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Dear Mr Hill

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

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 26 April 2023, 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 senior leaders, other staff, governors and a representative of 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, listened to pupils read, met with a group of pupils about their learning, looked at a sample of pupils' work and scrutinised school improvement documentation. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Widden 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:

- evaluate systems for assessing pupils' learning so that they know more and remember more over time across all wider curriculum subjects.

## **Main findings**

Since the last inspection, there have been several staffing changes, including in the leadership team and management of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You took up post as interim headteacher in July 2022 and are now the substantive headteacher. The school currently has eight early career teachers on the school staff.

You and your acting deputy headteacher have high expectations of both staff and pupils. Since your arrival at the school, you have worked with care and determination to ensure that all pupils are at the centre of the school's work. You both have ensured that staff work as a united and cohesive team, following a period of instability in staffing. Staff now feel empowered and confident in the direction that has been set for school improvement. They know they are trusted and supported to take ownership of their curriculum areas. The community appreciates the changes that have taken and continue to take place.

Leaders continue to prioritise reading. You ensure that the teaching of phonics is now consistent so that children who were in danger of falling behind catch up quickly. Leaders regularly assess where children are in their reading journey. This results in accurate and targeted support being put in place, including for pupils with SEND. Pupils are positive about reading and enjoy the range of high-quality texts available to them.

You are rebuilding a curriculum based on the knowledge and skills you want pupils to learn. Brave decisions to overhaul aspects of the mathematics curriculum are starting to prove successful. Pupils talk confidently about their mathematics learning and about how prior knowledge supports them to learn new content. However, this is not the case in other subjects. You have begun to support subject leaders to define their curriculums more precisely so that pupils know more and remember more over time.

You have made some significant changes to the way SEND is organised and managed. Pupils' plans and targets highlight the key next steps and support pupils with SEND to make progress. Leaders work hard to enable staff to increase their expertise in making the necessary adaptations to learning. However, some of this work is still in its early stages. Leaders have not yet checked targets set and adaptations made to learning to see if they are having the required impact on pupils' progress for those with specific learning needs.

Governance at the school has been strengthened. Governors routinely check leaders' actions through the introduction of a monitoring programme to see what is making a difference. You appreciate the challenge their role brings as well as that of the local authority. Governors understand their role in leading strategically alongside you but also in providing quality assurance on the decisions you make for the education of all pupils at the school.

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 Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Barraclough  
**His Majesty's Inspector**