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24 May 2023

Joanne Hitchmough  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Hitchmough

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Blackmoor Park Infants' School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 4 May 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 staff, governors, the CEO of the multi-academy trust 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, talked to pupils and looked at examples of their work. I observed pupils' behaviour in the playground, in the dining hall and as they moved around the school. I also listened to pupils read with a familiar adult. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Blackmoor Park Infants' 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, across subjects, leaders define more clearly the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn
- ensure that, within subjects, leaders identify the vocabulary that they want pupils to learn and the order in which essential vocabulary should be taught.

## **Main findings**

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing at a senior level. This has impacted on your timeliness in beginning to deal with some of the areas of improvement raised at the previous inspection. Your school development plan has a strong focus on addressing these issues. It also takes account of other areas in the school that you have identified that need further development. Within the development plan, there are clear lines of accountability and regular monitoring arrangements.

You are in the process of redesigning the curriculum in subjects beyond English and mathematics. In some subjects, leaders have identified the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. However, this knowledge is, at times, too broad and is not clearly defined. This makes it more difficult for teachers to design learning that helps pupils to know all that they should in readiness for future learning.

In some subjects, leaders have not considered the vocabulary that they want pupils to learn or the order in which essential vocabulary should be taught. This prevents pupils from deepening their learning in these subjects. You recognise the importance of ensuring that staff have access to regular subject-specific training to keep their knowledge fresh and up to date.

As a result of leaders' actions, pupils' behaviour has improved considerably. Staff have accessed training and there is now a consistent approach to behaviour management across the school. Staff now have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school, and they are keen to recite the school rules off by heart. Touring the school, I saw pupils who were mostly focused on their learning. Pupils move around the school in a sensible manner and play well together at social times. They also enjoy the time that they spend in the dinner hall, chatting with their friends about aspects of their day.

The governance of the school has been strengthened. Several new appointments have been made, and the governing body is benefiting from a broad range of suitable expertise. Governors have a sound understanding of where the school is at in terms of curriculum development. They offer leaders appropriate levels of support and challenge for many aspects of their work.

You have taken swift action to address some pupils' underachievement in phonics in 2022. For example, staff are now monitoring more closely the progress pupils make to help them to identify gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. Leaders have put interventions in place which they say are beginning to address these gaps. Teaching pupils to become confident readers is a clear focus for staff. I observed pupils who have fallen behind with the curriculum confidently reading books that were well matched to the sounds and words that they know. Pupils told me that they enjoy reading, and most read at home regularly with their parents and carers.

You attribute some pupils' weaker achievement in writing in 2022 to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. That said, you have taken appropriate action to address this issue. For instance, new initiatives have been introduced which are helping to develop both pupils' writing and comprehension skills. There are examples of pupils' writing displayed around the school which exemplify the impact of this work. Work in pupils' books show that they have opportunities to write at length across some areas of the curriculum.

Staff with whom I spoke recognise and appreciate the efforts of you and other leaders to help them to manage their workload and well-being.

You and your staff have benefited from the external support provided by a multi-academy trust. You explained to me that this support has been instrumental in helping to improve the quality of education that pupils receive, most notably in reading, writing and mathematics. The local authority has also brokered support to the school, for example with the implementation of the school's phonics programme.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow  
**His Majesty's Inspector**