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Beverley O'Neill  
Headteacher  
Blackshaw Lane Primary & Nursery School  
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Dear Mrs O'Neill

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Blackshaw Lane Primary & Nursery School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 19 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 other senior leaders, staff, governors and the local authority school improvement partner the actions that you have taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited a sample of pupils' learning activities, including in the early years. I reviewed leaders' improvement plan and looked at some curriculum documents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Blackshaw Lane Primary & Nursery 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:

- identify more clearly the essential knowledge, including vocabulary, that children will be taught in the early years

- enable subject leaders to understand the curriculum in the early years so they can provide support and challenge to colleagues about the knowledge that they teach to children in the areas of learning.

## **Main findings**

You explained that since the previous inspection your provision for three- and four-year-olds has changed from a maintained nursery class to a governor-run provision. Two teachers, including the deputy headteacher, have recently left the school. The senior leadership team has been reorganised and now consists of yourself, two newly appointed assistant headteachers and the school business manager. You and your governors explained that the process has started for the school to join a local multi-academy trust.

You have ensured that all pupils, including those with SEND, continue to be supported in their learning. You have focused staff on continuing to identify and address the gaps in pupils' learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. You have supported subject leaders to begin to revise subject curriculums. These leaders are starting to have increased confidence in leading their subjects. Staff are developing greater subject-specific knowledge. They are starting to be clearer about the knowledge and skills that pupils should learn. You recognise that leaders' work to refine the content of subject curriculums is more developed in some subjects, such as in history. Your leaders are beginning to refine the curriculums of a larger number of wider curriculum subjects, ready for use from September 2023.

In early years, your staff have started to improve how they use the learning environment to support children's learning, including outdoors. Staff are also beginning to use resources and activities with more thought about children's needs, development and interests. However, your leaders have not thought through the essential knowledge, including vocabulary, that children in the Nursery and Reception classes should learn in some areas of learning. In addition, some subject leaders do not have enough understanding of early years so they can help to further develop the curriculum for these children. You have made sure that senior leaders have more time and expertise in early years to lead this phase of the school.

Your staff continue to support effectively those pupils who struggle to learn to read. Your leaders have started to build on their success in developing the teaching of phonics to now give a more deliberate focus to developing older pupils' motivation to read independently. To support this work, you have invested in a richer range of suitable books for each year group of pupils in key stage 2. Your staff are beginning to promote the love of reading with pupils more successfully than they did previously.

You have set out reasonable plans to improve the work of the school. You and your leaders are acting on key action points that you have identified. Staff told me that you and other leaders introduce changes carefully. They said that they are given the support and advice they need. Staff morale is high. Governors have started to review your work

more carefully. They meet with individual subject leaders now to find out about the impact of these leaders' work on the curriculum. Governors have identified that they now need to ensure that the full governing body understands the curriculum and teaching at the school.

You said that, since the previous inspection, you have particularly benefited from being involved in a funded improvement partnership with a multi-academy trust. You explained that leaders' strengthened work on phonics and reading is an example of the impact of the external help that you have received. You and governors also value the advice provided by the local authority about how to further improve the work of the school. You and other leaders explained that teaching in the early years has been strengthened through the advice of external consultants, funded by the local authority. Your governors' work has been enhanced by an external review of governance that had started, but not been completed, when inspectors last visited the school. This work is now complete. The findings from this review have informed improvements to the work of the governing body.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan  
**His Majesty's Inspector**