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Jon Carthy  
Headteacher  
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Kent  
ME7 5XX

Dear Mr Carthy

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

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 31 January 2024, 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.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other leaders, trustees and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust 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 reviewed documents, visited lessons, heard pupils read, spoke to pupils, scrutinised individual pupil's books and visited lessons. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

### **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:

- Further refine the curriculum so teachers know the precise knowledge pupils must understand and remember, enabling their learning to build securely over time.

- Continue supporting staff to adapt their teaching in every area of the curriculum, so all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve as well as they should.

## **Main findings**

Since the previous inspection, you have prioritised improving the quality of phonics teaching for pupils who are learning to read. You have rejuvenated your phonics scheme by providing effective external training and regular internal coaching. Staff are proud to be reading experts and now teach the curriculum with fidelity. Teachers quickly identify any pupils in need of support and make sure they get exactly the right help. Pupils read texts that match the sounds they know. They enjoy the books teachers read to them and talk enthusiastically about familiar stories and characters. The school is determined that all pupils will become fluent readers. You have ensured that pupils with SEND get the help they need to learn the same phonics curriculum as their peers.

You have carried out a full review of the curriculum since the last inspection. Your curriculum design is now in line with the trust's high expectations. You are aware that outcomes in mathematics are not good enough. This is because of historic weaknesses in the curriculum resulting in gaps in pupils' learning. Staff are now following the mathematics curriculum with fidelity. You are supporting teachers as they adapt their teaching and use concrete resources to help pupils catch up and keep up. In Reception, you have strengthened the curriculum so that children develop a secure understanding of number in readiness for key stage 1. Across the wider curriculum, the school has identified long-term learning goals, which are broken down into smaller steps so that teachers know what to teach and when. A progression of knowledge and skills is in place for each subject. Key vocabulary, including technical language, has been identified across the curriculum. The most important knowledge pupils must understand and remember is more precisely set out in some subjects than in others. Some curriculums are still relatively new and, although pupils remember what they learned recently, they struggle to make connections with what they learned before.

The school has been ably supported by the trust to implement its teaching and learning strategy. You have trained staff in specific teaching skills so that all pupils, including those with SEND, access the same curriculum. From Reception to the end of key stage 2, you expect staff to focus on the key knowledge pupils must learn. You also expect staff to use questioning and adapt their teaching so that no pupil is left behind. Furthermore, teachers have had professional development to make their practice inclusive of all pupils' needs. The school has identified a range of practical methods to help all pupils, particularly those with SEND, in each area of the curriculum. These methods are being incorporated into daily classroom life as part of the ordinarily available offer. You appreciate that this new approach can prove challenging for some staff, and there is still some variation in teaching across the school. You have put support in place so that teachers understand the raised, shared expectations, and you challenge appropriately if there are any concerns.

You have made effective use of external support from educational consultants as well as internal support from the trust partner schools and the CEO. Trustees have refined the scheme of delegation following an external review of governance. This is enabling them to monitor the school's work more effectively and hold it to account knowledgeably. Your self-evaluation and action plans are accurate and rightly focused on pupils' outcomes. Each curriculum area has an action plan highlighting strengths and next steps. Although improvements have yet to be applied consistently across the school, you have embraced the changes, some of which are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of The Westbrook Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Medway. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Brinkley  
**His Majesty's Inspector**