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Mrs Brigitte Letts  
Arley Primary School  
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Warwickshire  
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Dear Mrs Letts

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Arley Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- improve attendance levels so that they are closer to national averages and the number of pupils who are persistently absent declines rapidly
- continue to ensure that teachers have high expectations so that pupils' progress accelerates and more pupils reach the standards appropriate for their age.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, three representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Other action plans for literacy, numeracy and the early years were discussed. I visited almost all classes except for the Year 5 and 6 classes which were out on a school trip. A learning walk was undertaken jointly with

the deputy headteacher. We observed teaching and spoke to pupils about what they were learning to do. I met with a group of six pupils and looked at their books with them. I also scrutinised a wider sample of pupils' books during the afternoon. I looked at minutes of governors' meetings, checks on the impact that teaching is having on learning, findings from the pupil premium review and examples of external review documentation.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, one teacher has left the school. The school is currently recruiting for a teaching assistant.

## **Main findings**

At the last inspection, leaders and governors were asked to develop three key areas and undertake an external review of the use of the pupil premium.

You have now successfully overcome many of the long-standing issues facing the school in the lead-up to the last inspection. You have changed the culture in the school. Improvements have been more rapid and focused since the shift to a positive 'can do' attitude. Effective action has been taken to improve weaknesses in teaching. As a result, greater consistency and higher expectations are in place across the school. You have created a united staff team that shares your high aspirations for the whole school community.

You have streamlined assessment procedures. There is now one system in place to assess and track pupils' progress. You thoroughly analyse the progress of different groups of pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged. You make clear that teachers are accountable for the progress made by pupils. You regularly check on pupils' progress in meetings with teachers. Teachers bring pupils' books to prove what pupils can do. The books of current pupils show good progress, with many pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, making faster progress. Teachers understand the need for continued improvement and they want pupils to succeed.

You dedicated time to exploring the end-of-year expectations with all staff. Working together, they looked carefully at each statement. They discussed the learning sequence from the early years to Year 6. This was a significant step forward as previously many staff worked in isolation. A bank of exemplification material has been developed that supports teachers in making accurate judgements about pupils' work. These judgements at the end of the early years and key stages 1 and 2 are checked regularly. Teachers are now clear about what is expected. They understand the role they play in ensuring that the results for the end of key stage 2 improve for all pupils.

You provided professional development for teachers to help develop their skills and knowledge in teaching reading, writing and mathematics. You accessed additional support and training through the Strategic School Improvement Fund. You monitor the effectiveness of this training and the impact it has on raising standards. The local authority task group also holds leaders to account. As a result, teaching across the school has improved.

Teachers now understand how to teach reading across all age and ability groups. Plans show that teachers provide opportunities for pupils to review and reflect on what they are reading. Events such as the reading festival and the 'reading rocks' day have raised the profile of reading. Key texts are chosen with care to ensure a suitable balance and appropriate challenge over time. Pupils spoken to during the monitoring visit expressed a love of reading.

Training in mathematics is having a positive impact. Teachers plan lessons around opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and thinking skills. Pupils are explicitly taught key vocabulary which helps them to express themselves clearly. The learning environment has been developed to stimulate mathematical thinking and reasoning. Appropriate resources are now in place. Pupils are beginning to use them effectively in the weekly challenges. Pupils are now showing greater determination and the resilience to have a go and keep on trying until they find a solution. The pupil survey indicates improved attitudes towards mathematics from pupils of all ages.

You insist on quality-first teaching for all pupils. You are aware of the significant underachievement of pupils in the past, but do not accept excuses for pupils' current standards of attainment. You have established a range of ways in which pupils who are underachieving are helped to catch up. Supported groups offer further challenge, and support and boost pupils before they are formally tested. Other interventions, such as precision teaching in reading or number, are helping pupils to develop specific skills. Teachers also ensure that instant intervention during a lesson prevents a child from falling further behind. These catch-up systems are now used consistently across the school. They are beginning to help more pupils catch up and close the gaps with others nationally. However, you are aware of the difficulties you still face in attaining standards that are in line with other pupils nationally.

The early years has improved since the last inspection. Assessment procedures have been revised. Observations at home and at school now ensure that a full picture of what a child can and cannot do is established for each individual child. Moderation with other schools and by the local authority help check that these are accurate. Adults are much clearer about the next steps for each child, and quickly identify those who need extra help from the start. Progress is closely monitored by leaders. There has been a clear upward trend over the last four years. Assessments of current pupils indicate that outcomes look set to rise again this summer.

During the monitoring visit, it was clear to see how engaged boys and girls are in their learning. The early years' curriculum now includes themes, such as superheroes, which interest the boys. A focus on physical development is helping boys develop the skills they need to be successful writers. As a result of being the target group in the early years, boys are making better progress than all other groups in reading, writing and mathematics. This is helping them to catch up and reach the expected standards.

Governors commissioned their own external review of governance following the last inspection. They used a skills audit before successfully recruiting new governors. They have a clear strategic drive for improvement. Governors do not accept at face value what they are told. They ensure that they provide rigorous challenge and appropriate support. They are ambitious for the school.

The last inspection recommended a review of the use of the pupil premium. Two reviews have been undertaken. Leaders state that the first review was inadequate, and did not provide a suitable challenge or identify clear actions to help the school move forward. The second review was carried out in February 2018. Robust systems are in place to ensure that barriers to learning are identified. Detailed individual pupil plans identify appropriate and timely support. Progress and the impact of the funding are tracked in great detail. Leadership of provision for disadvantaged pupils is a strength of the school, and has been further developed following the review.

Leaders are aware that attendance levels are currently too low. They have declined since the last inspection. Action is being taken to support families of children who are persistently absent. Leaders link attendance with the progress children are making. They are working hard to help parents understand why their children should be in school every day. However, leaders know that they now need to challenge absences from school more rigorously.

### **External support**

Since September 2017, the local authority has provided significant support and a high level of challenge. This is helping the school improve at a more rapid pace. Through regular task-group meetings, leaders have been held to account. Training opportunities and regular monitoring are ensuring that improvements have been systematically introduced and implemented. The learning improvement officer knows the school well. Regular visits and coaching for middle leaders are supporting the development of strong leadership at all levels. Roles and responsibilities are clear and accountability is understood. The local authority is now providing support to help deal with the low levels of attendance, particularly of pupils from a few hard-to-reach families.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicola Harwood

**Her Majesty's Inspector**