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02 May 2013

Sharon Barnes  
Headteacher  
Birds Bush Primary School  
Birds Bush Road  
Belgrave  
Tamworth  
B77 2NE

Dear Mrs Barnes

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Birds Bush Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 01 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in 9 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, some members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan and other key documents and I analysed in detail, with you, the school performance data.

#### **Context**

There have been no staffing changes since the last inspection which judged the school to require improvement. You have reorganised the teaching of mathematics and literacy in Years 5 and 6 to have single age classes for most sessions.

#### **Main findings**

You have acted swiftly in several key areas since the last monitoring visit. The governing body has appointed a newly established focus group which takes responsibility for overseeing improvement. This group reports back to the full governing body and has undertaken additional training recently. You have revised the school's strategic planning which now contains much more accurate detail about the progress pupils are making. This revised plan has been converted into a useful document called 'Getting to Good and Beyond' which you plan to share with parents via the school website. The plan contains key headline school aims but, crucially, is based on more accurate data and shows genuine ambition.

Senior leaders' shared roles and responsibilities have greater clarity, although this is relatively new. They have an enhanced role in managing other colleagues and undertake more frequent and shared lesson observations. The outcomes of these observations are useful but too broad and are not yet converted into precise targets for pupils or at school level. Some simple changes have helped. For example, teachers have shared leadership and planning time to ensure consistency in lesson content; pupil progress is now reviewed each half term and the outcomes then used to provide additional support where appropriate. Colleagues from outside school are involved in checking the accuracy of such reviews. Many staff have started additional training, partly funded by the Local Authority, to develop their leadership skills.

This range of activity has brought about more rapid improvement. Much of it is relatively recent however and still to show full and sustained impact. The new systems for monitoring pupil progress for example, although accurate, show some gaps in performance for key groups. They include more able pupils and pupils who are entitled to additional premium funding. Similarly, boys in Key Stage 1 do not as well as girls in their literacy, particularly writing skills; and standards of mathematics for the older pupils are improving but remain flat. Collectively these are significant. Your school plan now has such groups identified and the closing of any gaps in progress features as part of your regular discussions. However, some of your subsequent school monitoring that follows on from the analysis of this data remains broad rather than precise. As an example, lesson observations should focus on more precise aspects (such as boys writing skills) rather than a generic commentary on overall lesson quality.

The targets for test results in summer 2013 are ambitious and, if realised, will show considerable improvement. Teaching is improving but expectations could be raised yet further, especially in regard to the capabilities of more able pupils. You have agreed to make this the focus of the future round of lesson observations and convert your findings into more precise school targets.

You and your senior leaders are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that you should:

- refine the purpose of future lesson monitoring and use the findings to increase expectations for those pupils at risk of underachievement.
- ensure that all senior leaders and governors develop their expertise in analysing data in more detail.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The Local Authority partly funds and continues to provide additional training for staff on working with more able pupils, mathematics and developing middle managers.

This training is well received by the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan

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**Her Majesty's Inspector**