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25 November 2013

Mrs Nikki Lawton  
Headteacher  
Pebble Brook Primary School  
Balmoral Avenue  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW2 6PL

Dear Mrs Lawton

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pebble Brook Primary School, Cheshire East**

Following my visit to your school on 22 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the Raising Achievement Plan clearly states throughout the document desired impact of each action on the achievement of every group of pupils, particularly of more able pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who are supported by the pupil premium funding.
- Ensure that all teaching improves further so that it is at least good and that there is enough outstanding teaching to raise the achievement of the above underperforming groups as rapidly as possible.
- Ensure that advice given to pupils in marking is clear and includes an immediate task that challenges pupils further and develops a learning dialogue between them and their teachers.

- Continue to monitor pupils' behaviour regularly to ensure that it is never less than good, especially in terms of learning behaviours such as independence and initiative.
- Ensure that in feedback to teachers after lesson observations there is always an evaluation of pupils' progress, particularly of underachieving groups, and a clear target set for improvement.
- Ensure that such feedback gives a clear judgement and prioritises the few aspects of teaching most likely to drive forward improvement fastest.
- Consider adopting a uniform format and criteria for all such feedback based on the Teacher Standards.
- Work with external partners to provide support for the recently appointed headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders who are new to their roles, so that they can rapidly become as effective as possible in them.
- Continue to support the governors in their actions to further improve their capacity to provide a robust challenge to the school.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders and the Chair and members of the Governing Body, to discuss the action you have taken since the last inspection. A range of documents was considered during the visit, and the Raising Achievement Plan was evaluated. Records of the outcomes of monitoring activities and of the impact of performance management were also considered, as well as a small sample of pupils' written work.

## **Context**

There have been no significant changes to the school since the section 5 inspection which judged the school to require improvement.

## **Main findings**

Although a relatively new team, you, your senior leaders and governors have helped the school to accept honestly what was a disappointing inspection outcome and you share a good understanding of what the school needs to do in order to become good. You all show energy, enthusiasm and strong commitment to the school's improvement.

In the short time since the last inspection you have made good progress in tackling the areas for improvement recommended at the time of the last inspection. You have set in place an action plan that shows strong capacity to improve the school to good, although a few minor amendments will make it still sharper. In particular more

detail is needed on how the school will measure the precise impact of its proposed actions on the achievement of key pupil groups. The plan should also clearly justify the targets it sets.

You have heeded the messages in the last inspection report about the Early Years curriculum. Changes have been made to the learning environment for these pupils and to weekly timetables. Also, better use of technology has streamlined arrangements for the evaluation of their development. These changes are already beginning to show impact, for example on the achievement of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

There are already signs of improvement in the quality of teaching provided by the school. This is because systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are robust senior and other staff, including teaching assistants, have been well supported by ready access to professional development. However more coherent and consistent criteria for judging teaching seen in lesson observations would ensure that messages given to staff about their performance are unambiguous. You could consider wider use of the Teacher Standards for this purpose.

You are aware that some initiatives to improve teaching work are not yet securely and consistently in place. The school now needs to eradicate any teaching that is less than good and ensure that there is enough outstanding teaching to challenge all pupils, especially the more able. For example, the sample of pupils' work seen during my visit showed that feedback from marking is not yet consistently helpful or challenging enough across year groups and subjects.

Systems of target setting have been revised to be more challenging for all pupils but you recognise that there while some gaps in achievement narrowed in the 2013 tests, notably in writing, some did not. For example those children supported by the pupil premium and some high-ability pupils did not do as well in reading as others in the school. The proportion of pupils who exceeded expected progress also remains too low.

The governing body has been strengthened by the re-structuring of its committees and the Chair and other governors have taken professional training in governance and in understanding measures of pupils' achievement. Governors are highly committed to improving the school and show good capacity to help it 'get to good'. Challenging targets are set for your own performance and neither you nor they shy away from hard staffing decisions where performance is less than good.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

As a school that requires improvement you are entitled to enhanced support from the local authority, but you also make effective use of a range of external support. For example, you have drawn well on the local Teaching School alliance and other outstanding schools to extend the sharing of good practice and this has shown

impact in the improvements made in teaching. You also make good use of the services of an external consultant to support your self-evaluation.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire East and as below.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

### **Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [ [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk) ] – for academies