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26 November 2014

Ms Lorna McIsaac  
Headteacher  
Pensford Primary School  
Pensford Hill  
Pensford  
Bristol  
BS39 4AA

Dear Ms McIsaac

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

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not focused sharply on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- focus the school improvement plan's priorities on the areas identified as needing improvement
- improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good across the school
- ensure pupils make good progress across the school and reduce the attainment gap that currently exists between different groups of pupils
- agree performance management targets for teachers that relate directly to pupils' achievement.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and the teacher with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs. The inspector also held telephone conversations with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. In addition, the inspector also met with a group of pupils and looked at their workbooks.

## **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, a teacher has returned from maternity leave and another has started her maternity leave. A new teaching assistant has been appointed, as have two part-time staff who share the role of school administrator. As a result of a few governors leaving the governing body, new members have been appointed to replace them.

As part of the planned maintenance programme, the school was re-roofed over the summer.

## **Main findings**

After the previous inspection, the school quickly introduced initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and increase pupils' progress. However, the actions taken have achieved mixed results as standards are not rising quickly enough and teaching inconsistencies still exist.

In 2014, Year 2 pupils' results increased from the previous year. However, standards remain below the national average for reading and writing. The mathematics results are significantly below the national average. Very few pupils achieved the higher levels in any subject. Girls' results were slightly better than boys for reading and writing. In mathematics, the results for both girls and boys were poor. In 2014, there were no Year 1 pupils with special educational needs.

The 2014 results of the Year 1 pupils' phonics check are an improvement on the previous year's results. The school's overall results are also above the national average. Girls out performed boys as a higher proportion reached the nationally expected standard. In 2013 and 2014, there were no Year 1 pupils with special educational needs and only a very few disadvantaged pupils.

The proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the level expected at the end of 2014 was broadly in line with the national average for mathematics, reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Girls made more progress than boys across Key Stage 2. As a result, girls out-performed boys in mathematics and were almost two years ahead in their understanding and use of English grammar, punctuation and

spelling. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the year group was also around two years.

The school's current improvement plan sets out the priority to improve the quality of learning. It also focuses on improving pupils' performance in mathematics and writing. Overall, the plan is not detailed enough; it does not state who has responsibility for leading each initiative and it does not provide dates when progress will be evaluated. The targets used to determine the plan's impact are not sufficiently measurable as they do not focus sharply enough on improving pupils' achievement.

The staff with responsibility for leading English and mathematics monitor pupils' performance in their respective subjects to identify any gaps in pupils' learning. Each subject leader has prepared an action plan that highlights relevant areas to improve. The plans are not sufficiently detailed; they do not include precise targets that can be used to evaluate how well each action is impacting on improving pupils' performance.

The senior leaders' evaluation of teaching is that it is not of a high enough quality and that further improvement is needed. The headteacher monitors teaching regularly and tracks pupils' progress and attainment and shares her analysis with the governing body. The school's performance management systems are being used to hold staff to account for pupils' progress. At present, the targets for judging pupils' progress are not sufficiently quantifiable and do not ensure that individual teacher's performance can be evaluated accurately.

Teachers are marking pupils' work carefully by praising tasks that have been completed well and highlighting where improvement is possible. Pupils appreciate the level of detail that they receive and look forward to reading what their teachers have written. Pupils have recently been set individual short-term targets that focus on improving particular aspects of their English and mathematics work. Pupils understand these personal priorities but, as yet, there is no evidence to show whether they are helping pupils to make faster progress. In terms of understanding their end-of-year goals, pupils are unsure of the standards at which they are currently working and they are unclear about their end-of-year targets.

The teachers are meeting regularly to discuss and review pupils' performance. This newly introduced initiative is helping to ensure that teachers have a clear view of each individual pupil's progress. Additional meetings have been arranged for teachers and parents to discuss this information and consider how families can help to support their child's development.

The governing body has increased the level of support and challenge that it provides to the school. Individual governors have participated in different training events to help them to develop a clear knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The Chair of the Governing Body meets the headteacher each week

to discuss developments. This regular appointment ensures that he is fully aware of the school's priorities.

The minutes of the most recent governing body meeting record that governors were presented with and accepted the newly revised school development plan. The minutes do not record if any discussion took place to consider whether the new priorities were appropriate. Similarly, although the minutes of the curriculum committee were presented during the full governing body meeting, no discussion is recorded as having taken place. This is surprising because the curriculum committee minutes highlight a number of areas where pupils under-performed.

The headteacher's reports to the governing body provide a broad overview of activity taking place within the school. They do not provide a clear evaluation of how well the school is performing against the priorities identified in the school's improvement plan.

### **External support**

Following the school's inspection, the local authority arranged for an experienced headteacher to work with and support the school. The relationship was relatively short-lived as the headteacher involved moved away from the area. As a result, the school has largely been working independently to move forwards.

In September 2014, a new local authority school adviser was assigned to work with the school. He has visited the school twice and has made arrangements to visit again before the end of the autumn term. After his last visit, the adviser presented a report to the school but, to date, it has not been discussed by the governing body.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bath and North East Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton

**Her Majesty's Inspector**