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21 May 2015

Miss Georgina Salter  
Headteacher  
Painters Ash Primary School  
Masefield Road  
Gravesend  
DA11 8EL

Dear Miss Salter

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Painters Ash Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 21 May 2015, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, another governor and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. You led me on a tour of the school, including every class. I evaluated the school improvement plan and a wide range of other documents. In particular, I looked at information about pupils' achievement in the current academic year.

## **Context**

Since the inspection, which judged the school to require improvement, two new members of staff have joined the school. Leadership has been strengthened by the completion of the allocation of roles and responsibilities which was underway at the time.

## **Main findings**

Leaders at all levels have taken decisive action to address the areas for improvement set out at the last inspection. Governors challenged leaders about the outcome and have continued to hold leaders to account since. You responded professionally to the outcome and have re-doubled your efforts to convert Painters Ash into a good school. You are highly ambitious for the school and want it to be judged outstanding eventually. You are ably supported by your senior leadership team. You were working to improve teaching at the time of the inspection and it is now consistently good.

Middle leaders, including subject leaders, are making an increasingly positive contribution to the improvements that are underway. There is a very clear strategy for improving pupils' results in mathematics and english. There is a relentless focus on improvements to reading which has contributed effectively to rapid progress across all year groups. You were already addressing these challenges at the time of the inspection so have re-focused your efforts.

The school's action plan is clear and has some areas of real strength such as the simple success criteria. This is unusual in plans of this type. Each aspect of the plan has been assigned to an 'owner'. You have made good use of governors in supporting the development of this plan. The local authority has also provided helpful advice and guidance to ensure that the plan is focused on the right things. All leaders are now executing their duties effectively and base their actions on secure information. Effective use of accurate school information has been a key factor in the rapid improvements seen since the inspection.

Achievement is improving quickly. For example, progress in the current Year 6 is good. Although results in writing are just below the national average, pupils joined the school with weak prior attainment and had to work hard to catch up. Results in reading and mathematics are, however, in line with national expectations. This is because better teaching has contributed to faster progress. Pupils' overall attainment therefore compares favourably to national averages which is evidence of good achievement. This pattern is repeated lower down the school. Also, the school's organisation of phonics teaching (letters and the sounds they make) has been purposeful and productive. This has led to secure results in Years 1 and 2. Pupils who need further help are identified early and well-planned interventions are put in place.

Much of this good practice begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage which was judged to be good at the last inspection. It remains a strength of the school. Early years practitioners support the school's strategies for improving reading and writing very well. As a result, children are developing a passion for reading, extensive vocabulary and are well-prepared for Year 1. The vast majority of children are on-track to end the foundation stage with a good level of development.

Leaders are also skilfully using pupil achievement data to identify any under-performance of disadvantaged pupils. The school has a full programme of interventions to ensure that their needs are met appropriately. Consequently, gaps between them and their classmates are closing. They are also closing between disadvantaged pupils in school and all other children nationally. Indeed, in Years 3 and 4 disadvantaged students are doing better in writing and mathematics than other children in their classes.

Higher attaining pupils are also receiving focused support. This is helping their progress accelerate. Twice as many as in 2014 are on-track to achieve level 6 in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.

Reading levels have improved quickly and the progress to cause this has been rapid. Pupils are making nearly double the rate of progress expected. The information provided to support this outcome is based on accurate assessment, reliable checks made by teachers in other schools and rigorous comparisons with work elsewhere. A key factor in this success has been the school-wide 'power of reading' initiative. The school's support for this is clear in the highly stimulating reading corners of each room and the availability of a wide stock of age-appropriate reading books. Parents have supported this initiative extremely well.

Teachers' marking is thorough due to a comprehensive and well-thought through policy. It is consistently followed by all teachers and teaching assistants. This gives clear marks (using visual codes) so that pupils know exactly what to do to improve. Evidence was seen in books of pupils responding well to marking and correcting their work as a result. Pupils were also seen to be assessing each other's work. The 'pink-ink-think' model is effective and is helping raise standards of pupils' work.

You are rightly working on necessary changes to the curriculum. You have selected 'The 21 Steps' programme as a potentially good curriculum for the school. You are currently checking that it will help to sustain improvements, especially for more able students. You are clear that you need to compare the results it may produce with current pupil achievement. You will only proceed if it meets the pupils' needs fully. However, the programme enables staff to continue to provide a rich blend of topics and subjects in their creative curriculum.

You have taken a very positive approach to staff training. This is because you are aware that improvements to the quality of teaching are most likely to help pupils do even better. Teachers now work regularly in triads so that they can benefit from

each other's expertise and receive good feedback on their work. This training has resulted in teachers having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. It has also given them more skills to enable even the most able pupils to do well.

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**

Local authority officers have acted quickly to support the school since the inspection. They have provided support for the necessary action-planning arising from the inspection. The school's improvement adviser visits regularly. She checks progress with the senior leadership team at each visit. The school improvement adviser leaves clear notes of visits. Some of these notes repeat suggestions made on previous occasions so it is not always clear if suggested actions have been completed. Senior leaders appreciate brokered support from a local leader of education which is underway. You are also very clear that the Gravesham learning partnership is a helpful source of advice and guidance as you move forward.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**