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3 May 2018

Mrs Kirsty Hutchinson  
Headteacher  
Harden Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Hutchinson

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

Following my visit to your school on 19 April 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:

- continually raise the quality and consistency of teaching, assessment and the curriculum by further embedding the successful strategies already in place.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, the leaders for English and mathematics, the assistant special educational needs (SEN) coordinator, the governing body, and a representative of

the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was also evaluated.

A learning walk and book scrutiny were undertaken with senior leaders. The views of pupils and parents were gathered. A range of school documentation, such as self-evaluation, the school's assessment information, minutes from governing body meetings and the outcomes of monitoring activities, was considered.

## **Context**

The leadership team has remained stable since the last inspection, and two new teachers joined the school in September 2017. The school is currently exploring becoming part of a multi-academy trust.

## **Main findings**

Leaders have responded with vigour and determination in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Continued engagement with a range of external partners, such as the local authority and a local teaching school alliance, have been instrumental in bringing about development at a fast pace.

You have continued to refine your school improvement planning so that it is appropriately identifying priorities for development. You have made sure that there is a close link between the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and the actions you have devised. The plan contains precise success criteria and milestones, which are supporting leaders in checking the impact of the action taken.

Leaders have ensured that teachers have increasingly high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This has, in part, been accomplished through relating performance management targets closely to whole-school priorities for improvement. Even more significant, though, has been the impact of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which are continually being fine-tuned and developed. For example, the regular book scrutinies which leaders carry out are effective in quickly and precisely identifying any inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. Teachers receive regular feedback and, therefore, have a clear understanding of how to make the necessary improvements. Leaders are then able to use their monitoring information to identify any emerging whole-school training needs or where individual support is required.

Subject leaders and senior leaders have provided bespoke support for staff, often coaching individuals to bring about improvements. For example, they help teachers to improve the way they plan the sequence of learning in a unit of English work. Systems have become well established and routine checks are made to see whether the support has had the desired effect. These systems are not only improving the quality of teaching across the school but are developing leaders' skills in evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. The tailored support for individuals has

been particularly beneficial in making sure that staff who are new to the school swiftly get to grips with school systems and routines. You are aware that the effectiveness of monitoring activities will continue to develop further as leaders become more adept, and will be critical to maintaining consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

You have also made sure that assessment is as accurate as possible, and you hold teachers stringently to account for the progress their pupils make. Teachers now analyse their pupils' attainment and discuss the action they will take to address any slowing of progress or gaps in learning. Pre- and post-learning tasks are also supporting teachers in precisely identifying how to build on pupils' previous learning, and they help to provide the appropriate level of challenge and support for pupils to meet at least the age-related expectations and often beyond. Consequently, the needs of all groups, including the most able, are now more carefully considered. As part of leaders' work to develop the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, teachers now take greater responsibility for meeting the needs of this group of pupils.

In lessons, pupils demonstrate resilience and perseverance as they attempt challenging tasks which are pitched at just the right level to make them not too easy and not too hard. Pupils are showing how they are confident to draw on their prior learning when puzzling over tricky tasks. For example, pupils in Year 5 grappled with complex fractions problems and were able to give appropriate explanations to demonstrate their understanding using the facts they already knew to help them. The impact of the 'daily drilling' in mathematics lessons is clear to see. Pupils are becoming more proficient in their knowledge of number facts, and this has created more time in mathematics lessons for reasoning and problem-solving tasks to deepen pupils' learning. Teachers report that their subject knowledge of mathematics has improved as a result of training and new resources introduced by leaders. In turn, the pace of learning has quickened as teachers have been able to anticipate, and quickly address, any misconceptions in pupils' mathematical understanding.

Leaders introduced a new approach to the teaching of spelling. This has resulted in teachers using a wider variety of spelling tasks with greater confidence in their subject knowledge. Pupils are taking more responsibility for checking their spellings independently and like using the 'have a go' pads. Skilled teaching assistants are also delivering intervention sessions for pupils identified as needing any additional support with spelling. Leaders' scrutiny of work in pupils' books is showing improved spelling which is now being more frequently sustained through longer pieces of independent writing. Publishing examples of pupils' writing online has also been a motivating factor in pupils routinely producing work which they are proud of and that reflects their capabilities.

Pupils are thoroughly enjoying the newly introduced topic days. You have launched these to give pupils more opportunities to use and apply their writing and mathematics skills in a wider range of purposeful contexts. For example, baking is often included so that pupils are able to consolidate their understanding of weight and capacity. Pupils find these days inspiring and motivating and, consequently, they are producing work of a high standard as a result. Leaders have applied the principles of this work in developing a new long-term plan which is due to be introduced in September 2018.

Pupils' outcomes in 2017 were strong and showing improvement throughout the school. By the end of Reception, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above average and improving. Likewise, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average and improving. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard at the end of key stages 1 and 2 was well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Additionally, the proportion of pupils who exceeded the expected standards was also well above average in all subjects and at both key stages 1 and 2, except in writing at key stage 2, which was just below the national average. The school's assessment information along with work in pupils' books show that pupils are making even better progress this year and that this is more consistent throughout the school and for all groups of pupils.

### **External support**

You have been proactive in engaging with a range of local partners, such as a teaching school alliance, and have applied for bids to support the school's development. The partnerships have enabled you and leaders of science, SEN, English and mathematics to have access to regular professional development opportunities. The impact of this can be seen in the rapid progress made by the school since the last inspection. Support from the local authority makes sure that the accuracy of leaders' evaluations and the impact of their actions are under rigorous review, and ensures that the school continues to be ambitious in its journey of improvement. Leaders are now well equipped to sustain the improvements made so far.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**