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4 November 2015

Mrs K Hutchinson  
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 21 October 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2015. 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 in order to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, the Chair and two other members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the academy's action plans, together with other documentation relating to school improvement and some evidence of pupils' progress and attainment. We visited classrooms together, spoke with pupils and looked at pupils' work. I also met with a group of most-able pupils. You and I undertook a scrutiny of English and mathematics books with the assistant headteachers.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been more changes to staffing. One teacher has left and there are three temporary teachers in post. You have appointed a temporary assistant headteacher from a member of the permanent staff. Two teachers are on family leave, one of whom is the deputy headteacher.

## **Main findings**

The inspection judgement in April 2015 has enabled you to increase the momentum of the improvements begun at the time of your appointment in September 2014. This is because nobody is now in any doubt that this academy was not good enough. You have made your expectations clear and settled for nothing but the best for the pupils of this academy.

You have continued the focus on improving leadership and increasing its capacity to drive forward the improvements needed in teaching. From September, you gathered around you two strong senior leaders who share your vision and aspirations for the pupils. You regularly hold them to account for their work, which is having a tangible impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, the pace of improvement has quickened since September and this, in turn, can be seen in pupils' learning and progress.

You have brought about improvements in teaching for new and established staff through well-planned transition and induction, appropriate training and support, and by the regular and robust checks that you and senior leaders make. This is having a tangible impact on pupils' learning. Pupils say they are more excited by their learning and feel challenged by the tasks set. Changes to the curriculum have also played a key role in this. Pupils take greater pride in their work. Teachers' marking and feedback is helping them to address errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling, as well as improve their handwriting and presentation. This is not yet consistent across all classes but the work of the assistant headteachers is driving forward improvements almost on a daily basis.

There are increased opportunities for pupils to write at length and with purpose. Pupils are very positive about these changes. They enjoy writing because of what they read and because they write about things they are learning about in other subjects, such as history and science.

Pupils are excited by their reading. It has become an integral part of their studies in literacy and the curriculum, but they also have more opportunities to read for pleasure. Teachers are attempting to develop pupils' understanding of what they read. This is because teachers have been given the training and support they need to improve their subject knowledge and questioning skills. Pupils' progress is hindered by their inability to explain their thinking clearly because they have not had opportunities from the outset to think for themselves. This is also the case in mathematics when pupils are asked to explain their reasoning when problem solving.

Nevertheless, you and your leaders know this and you are forging ahead with actions to address this aspect of pupils' learning.

You see the potential in other teachers to become leaders and you are harnessing this to further increase the capacity of leadership within the academy. Your senior leaders have mentored two teachers and you have commissioned the training and support needed for them to become effective subject leaders. These middle leaders are in a much better position now to lead and make checks on teaching than was seen at the inspection. You have plans to hand over the leadership of mathematics from senior leaders to a recently appointed teacher who is a mathematics lead teacher. She is well placed to provide the role model and leadership the school needs as it gets to grips with the mathematics curriculum.

The academy's action plan focuses on the areas for improvement and other areas identified through the school's own analyses. It is a very sharp plan that shows precisely what leaders expect good practice to look like. It makes clear who will carry out actions and when. It indicates who will make checks on the progress and impact of these actions, including external monitoring by the local authority. This makes it clear for governors, so that they can make precise checks on the school's progress. They are included in the monitoring cycle because they are linked to the key aspects of the school's work.

Although the governing body has a clear and accurate view of where the academy is at, members are determined to be even more proactive in checking and challenging the academy's work. The governing body provides regular and robust challenge to leaders through the work of the teaching and learning committee and the other work it undertakes, but wants to increase its effectiveness further. It has commissioned an external review, even though this was not a requirement from the previous inspection, which has provided governors with a clear steer. Governors are now working on developing an action plan that is more aligned to the academy's improvement plan.

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

### **External support**

Recognising the vulnerability of a stand-alone academy that requires improvement, you and the governing body have fully engaged with the local authority to provide an external view of how well the academy is doing. The achievement officer is making regular and robust checks and is providing detailed and evaluative feedback, with relevant points for improvement. Her recent findings align with what was seen during the inspection. In addition, the local authority standards and management group, chaired by the head of Bradford Achievement Service (BAS), are holding you to account for the progress and impact of actions.

You are outward looking and have actively sought to work with a well-established school partnership in Bradford, as well as local schools, to secure improvements in leadership and teaching. You use some of these partnerships to secure the accuracy of assessment by jointly moderating pupils' work.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer

**Her Majesty's Inspector**