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Mr Nathan Butler-Broad
Headteacher
Battle Primary Academy
Cranbury Road
Reading
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RG30 2TD

Dear Mr Butler-Broad

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Battle Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 25 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, governors and the trust 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:

- accelerate the progress of pupils, including the disadvantaged, in reading, writing and mathematics so that standards of achievement continue to rise
- improve the quality of teaching, particularly in the wider curriculum, so that more pupils achieve well in all subjects.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other staff who hold significant responsibilities, the chair of the governing body and with the multi-academy trust chief executive officer (via a telephone call) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. You joined me as I made brief visits to most classes, including those in the early years. During

these visits, I spoke with pupils and I sampled the work in pupils' books. You showed me a range of documentation about the actions taken since the last inspection. I also reviewed information about current pupils' attainment and progress across year groups. The school's single central record was checked.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership team. The interim headteacher left in July 2017. You joined the school as substantive headteacher in September 2017. A new part-time deputy headteacher also joined in September 2017 as the other part-time deputy headteacher returned from a period of absence. There have also been some changes to teaching and support staff.

Following the previous inspection, all members of the governing body resigned and relinquished their roles. From January 2017, an interim executive board (IEB) was established. The IEB transitioned into a local governing body in October 2017, appointing an experienced chair. Since the previous inspection, The Net Academies Trust has also experienced several changes to the role of chief executive officer, including two interim appointments. In December 2017, a new, substantive chief executive officer took up post.

Main findings

Following the inspection, the school has undergone a period of significant change. In the summer term 2017, the interim headteacher resigned and left and there was significant adjustment to local governance arrangements. As a result, during this period, school improvement stalled and the status quo, described in the previous report, persisted. Too little was achieved. Progress in making improvements to the quality of teaching, following the previous inspection, was initially very slow. However, since your appointment in September 2017, a renewed drive to get back on track has enveloped the school, built on higher expectations and a shared determination to improve. You have now set the school's improvement journey firmly back on course, stating your vision to 'lead the school to new heights' plainly.

From the start of your tenure, you have wasted no time in establishing higher expectations, and sharing your detailed improvement plan with all staff. You are mindful that improvement actions need to be well-considered and carefully staged over the year, so as not to overload or overwhelm key players. Nevertheless, you recognise that a greater degree of urgency is now needed in order for standards to continue to rise. You have constructed a well-judged school improvement plan that sets out clearly relevant actions and milestones. You have taken stock of your staff's skills and expertise, making some appropriate adjustments so that staff work increasingly to their strengths. You and other leaders have established a robust monitoring cycle in order to keep a check on the school's progress against key criteria. Where weaker teaching and learning have been identified, appropriate

support is now in place. In addition, governors are offering greater challenge and support than in the past. However, all parties need to ensure that a greater focus is now established on pupils' achievement in all subjects, not just in English and mathematics.

Together with the support of the recently formed governing body, you have steadily set about overhauling the school's policies and procedures. For example, many statutory policies have undergone review and been improved, including the school's safeguarding policy. You have revised the school's approach to the teaching of some subjects, including writing. In addition, you have ensured that staff have a better understanding of the curriculum and the school's assessment processes. As a result, there are now much clearer systems in place and all staff have a better understanding of school leaders' intent and expectations. You rightly prioritised these key actions in your first term to ensure that pupils are safe, statutory policies are in place, teachers are clearer on what is expected and leaders are able to evaluate school effectiveness more accurately.

The school's relatively new assessment leader provides wise counsel to colleagues. Together, you are now gathering more reliable and comprehensive information about pupils' performance. You and other leaders are beginning to make better use of this information, keeping a watchful oversight on the performance of key groups within the school, such as the disadvantaged pupils. This information shows that, from low starting points, more pupils are beginning to make greater gains in learning. More are on track to achieve age-related expectations, compared to the previous year, when standards dropped. Nevertheless, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are still too low and more is needed for all pupils to catch up.

Incremental improvements to pupils' outcomes have been achieved by bringing greater consistency to the quality of teaching throughout the school. Relationships in classrooms between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are positive. The quality of teaching is beginning to improve steadily. Teachers are beginning to respond well because of an increased focus on their professional development. They are exploring new ways of working, and are committed to improving their practice. For example, together, you and your staff are exploring new ways of planning pupils' learning in the wider curriculum. However, you agree that standards in some subjects, such as science, remain too variable.

The school is currently making positive progress towards becoming at least good at its next section 5 inspection. However, leaders, governors and trustees recognise that the school is in a critical phase, where maintaining the momentum and building on the improvements already started are the top priorities.

External support

The trust acknowledges that support for the school, immediately after the last inspection, was not robust enough. In recent times, help and advice have been more

forthcoming and the trust acknowledges that support from a more local partner is the best way forward. Consequently, trustees are supporting school leaders and local governors in exploring options for finding a suitable sponsor. Consultation is underway and leaders are meeting regularly with the Department for Education to find the right partner.

An appropriate level of challenge and support for school leaders was lacking in the past. From October 2017, a new, single governing body has replaced the IEB. This group is made up of governors with a high level of expertise and experience. Governors have recently completed a range of training, including safer recruitment. This means that responsible stakeholders are starting to become better informed and, consequently, starting to influence, more credibly, more rapid school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer or equivalent of the multi academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Reading. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector