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Simon Fisher  
Headteacher  
Firside Junior School  
Middleton's Lane  
Hellesdon  
Norwich  
NR6 5NF

Dear Mr Fisher

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Firside Junior School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 7 November 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 13 March 2012, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The school is improving. In most areas this improvement is rapid and is being sustained. As a result, pupils are reaching higher standards and making better progress. However, some improvements are inconsistent across the school.

The results of national examinations published since the last inspection show marked improvements. Pupils are now attaining higher standards at the end of Year 6 in both English and mathematics. The proportion that reach the expected level or better is now higher than the national average, with an increasing trend. There is little difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils make better progress than in previous years, and even more as they progress through the school. By Year 6, they achieve above expectations. Notably, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or who are disabled or who have special educational needs, make exceptional progress. When they leave the school they are around two terms ahead of expectations, both in English and mathematics.

Teaching has improved. The assessment of pupils' attainment is regular and accurate. Teachers have a good understanding of the progress that pupils are

making. In some well-planned classes this information is put to very good use to make sure that pupils who are behind, or who have found a topic difficult, are taught differently so that they catch up. This good practice is not seen in all year groups. In class, most pupils work well and relish opportunities to work independently. These skills are very well developed in Year 3, where pupils were observed working very effectively on sentence construction and on the identification of different types of word.

The school's support for disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs has improved markedly. Planning of support, and the checking of how well it is working, is effective. Pupils' needs are accurately identified and provided for, resulting in improved progress that is monitored well. Across all year groups, the progress made by pupils who need extra help is at least as good as other pupils.

Subject leaders are now more accountable for teachers' performance. They have a better understanding of their role in checking the effectiveness of other teachers teaching their subject. For example, changes to marking and aspects of literacy teaching are now undertaken by all staff. Self-evaluations of mathematics and English have identified clear areas for improvement. These areas have now been incorporated into school improvement plans so that all staff understand their role in helping all pupils to do as well as they can. Targets are challenging and precise, with clear deadlines for reaching them.

The checking of the effectiveness of teaching and learning is now part of the routine of the school. Lesson observations take place regularly, and accurately identify what teachers need to do to improve. Often, these areas are covered by whole-school events with a particular focus, for example on assessment. The school knows where the best elements of teaching practice are to be seen but this is not shared across all classes and year groups. For example, very effective structuring of mathematics to allow pupils of all abilities to learn well is seen in Year 3, but this is not consistent across other year groups.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have moved quickly to identify and make the changes that were needed following the last inspection. School improvement plans are clear and precise. Targets are measurable and progress towards them is checked. Accurate self-assessment has ensured that external support has been focused on the areas that the school needs to improve. Since the last inspection, the governing body has simplified its operation and now evaluates the school's and its own performance more effectively. Governors have a good understanding of the issues facing the school and how to challenge their own performance and to hold the school to account so that all pupils do as well as they can. Their expectations for the school are appropriately high.

The local authority's statement of action is comprehensive and is fit for purpose. The local authority has provided good support for the school in areas that needed to be improved.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2012

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that lesson activities build effectively on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding
  - making full use of assessment information when lessons are being planned to ensure that all groups of pupils are challenged consistently.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - providing learning tasks which are well matched to pupils' abilities so that they are motivated, enthusiastic and participate wholeheartedly in lessons
  - extending the range of practical activities for pupils
  - ensuring that planning for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs focuses precisely on their individual needs and helps them to make good progress
  - ensuring that teachers' marking identifies precisely how pupils can improve their work.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
  - extending the role of subject leaders so that they focus sharply on evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' progress
  - ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is focused on measuring its impact on their learning and progress
  - ensuring that governors are fully involved in evaluating the school's performance, by challenging and supporting developments and checking the impact of activities on pupils' progress.