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Mr Nick Toyne
Headteacher
Woolston Community Primary School
Hall Road
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Cheshire
WA1 4PA

Dear Mr Toyne

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Woolston Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 February 2013, and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Also, thank you to the pupils, the local authority officer and the Chair of the Governing Body who spoke with me.

Since the last inspection, there have been significant staff changes. These include two teachers who left the school during the autumn term, and the appointment of temporary staff to cover other long-term staff absences. Additionally, due to an increase in the number of classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, an extra teacher has been appointed. At the beginning of the academic year, the school opened a new designated provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. This caters for up to eight pupils and there are currently five on roll. The provision is staffed by a newly appointed teacher and two teaching assistants. One additional teaching assistant has also been appointed to the main school. A new member has been appointed to the governing body who has significant educational and local authority experience. At the start of January 2013, building work began to construct a new school which is adjacent to the existing premises on the site of the school playground. The new school is scheduled for completion in September 2013.

As a result of the inspection on 20 June 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 satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Pupils' achievement is improving. Standards are rising and the rate of progress made by pupils is increasing. However, the results of tests taken by pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 in 2012 show an overall declining trend compared to 2011. This demonstrates the legacy of underachievement by many pupils in the school. These results show that standards in

January 2012



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reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 are below average, especially for girls. The rate of progress made by pupils in Year 6, since they were in Year 2, is significantly below average. Pupils known to be eligible for funding via the pupil premium made less progress than other pupils. School data tracking the progress of pupils during the current academic year show increasing rates of progress. Pupils are on track to reach broadly average standards, which represents improvement this year. The progress for many is now more in line with that expected nationally but it is not yet good enough to ensure that all pupils quickly make up all the lost ground of previous under-achievement, especially in writing. More time is needed. The considerable staffing instability during the autumn term hindered pupils' progress and some time was lost in the drive for improvement. Nevertheless, due to leaders' determined actions, the corner has been turned and much needed improvement to the quality of teaching is helping pupils to do much better in 2013. In the majority of lessons seen in English and mathematics, pupils made expected and improving progress. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, pupils who speak English as an additional language and most other pupil groups, largely make the same progress as all other pupils.

The quality of teaching shows recent improvement. Leaders have successfully eradicated almost all inadequate teaching. The proportion of good teaching is increasing. As a result pupils are learning at a quicker rate. Overall, teachers' targets for pupils' learning are higher, although expectations of the amount of progress pupils should make in individual lessons are not always high enough. Staff have worked hard to improve teaching and this is seen in the better start to many lessons. Teachers plan carefully and are clear about the main aim of each lesson. These aims are shared with pupils at the start. However, teachers generally, do not use information about pupils' starting points sufficiently well. This results in a lack of challenge for some groups of pupils, including the more-able. Most lessons begin with an initial activity designed to capture pupils' interest and for the most part these work well. The good relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils feel increasingly confident in their work. Staff praise pupils' efforts widely and this helps to motivate pupils and increase their concentration. Staff training to improve the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) and writing, has helped to increase teachers' knowledge and skills. Consequently, teaching of these areas is much improved and pupils are benefiting from sharper and more precise expectations. Older pupils are now aware of their targets in English and mathematics.

The school continues to meet the requirements for safeguarding pupils, including maintaining a single central register detailing the required checks made on the suitability of staff.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are bringing about improvement to the school's performance through a clear approach to identifying areas to improve and taking decisive action to improve them. The senior leaders are steadfast in their determination to quicken the improvement to pupils' standards. They recognise the delays to improvements brought about by the turbulence to staffing earlier in the school year. They have faced up to the significant challenge of the underperformance of the school. Performance management is much improved. Staff changes have been well managed. Senior and middle leaders' roles

and responsibilities have been reviewed. In particular, the senior leaders have introduced an improved rigour to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision, especially teaching. As a result, the monitoring role of middle leaders is improved, especially in English, and is beginning to make a notable impact on the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress. The data tracking system and the use of this to check on pupils' progress is now much sharper. The governing body is increasingly well informed through more effective reporting from middle and senior leaders. The Woolston Improving School Committee (WISC), established by the governing body with the support of the local authority, is especially notable for the improved focus upon raising standards. The governing body is increasingly challenging to school leaders. Plans to provide training for governors to improve their skills in interpreting and using data have not yet materialised. There is an urgent need for this to be completed to improve the whole governing body's ability to hold leaders accountable for their actions.

The local authority gives effective support to the school. A statement of action was quickly produced following the last inspection with the full involvement of the school. This was assessed by Her Majesty's Inspector as fit for purpose. Since then, the planned actions have been largely fulfilled and continue to provide a good steer to the school's improvement. The role of the local authority is mostly one of monitoring and brokering external advice and training. The local authority advisor has worked well with senior leaders to monitor teaching, offer advice and help establish links with local schools that provide opportunities to observe high quality teaching. This makes a good contribution to school improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Mr John Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently at least good in order to raise attainment and accelerate pupils' learning and progress, particularly in English, by:
 - ensuring teachers' expectations are consistently high in all classes
 - ensuring introductions to lessons are sharply focused allowing more time for pupils to complete tasks and explore learning for themselves
 - improving the use of assessment information to ensure lesson plans take full account of pupils' starting points and provide challenge, particularly for the more-able
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum
 - ensuring all pupils are aware of their learning targets in writing
 - improving the provision for reading for the more-able pupils at both key stages.

- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership by:
 - ensuring actions, particularly the monitoring of teaching, have a consistently positive impact on pupils' learning across the school
 - ensuring the curriculum fully meets the needs of the more-able pupils
 - providing more rigorous subject leadership in English
 - ensuring the governing body holds leaders rigorously to account for planned improvements.