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27 March 2013

Andrew Brierley  
West Croft Junior School  
Coronation Road  
Bideford  
Devon  
EX39 3DE

Dear Mr Brierley

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to West Croft Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school's post-Ofsted action plans, together with other documentation, including governing body minutes and the most recent analysis of pupils' achievement. Documentation relating to the monitoring of teaching and the management of teachers performance was also discussed.

#### **Context**

There have been no significant changes to staff or the school's organisation since the inspection. However, two Year 4 teachers are leaving at the end of the Spring term and the school is covering these roles temporarily by employing agency staff for the Summer term.

## Main findings

The school has made good use of the findings from the section 5 inspection to tackle weaknesses in achievement through a direct focus on improving the quality of teaching. Staff and governors share your determination for the school to become good as quickly as possible, not least because they were all involved in devising the actions required. The action plans set out clearly what needs to be done. They are regularly reviewed so that you and your colleagues can check if the actions are making a difference. Not all of the success criteria state clearly enough what effect improvements are expected to have on pupils' attainment and progress.

You and your senior leaders are working well to strengthen middle leadership through support and training and by delegating more responsibility to them. Consequently, senior and middle leaders are becoming increasingly confident in fulfilling their leadership roles. They understand that they are accountable for the quality of teaching of the staff they lead and manage. Training from your attached school improvement officer supports this work well. Greater clarity about how teachers' performance is managed means that your staff are more accountable for the progress their pupils make. You have strengthened the procedures for tracking the progress that different groups of pupils make as they move through the school. However, this information needs to be summarised clearly and concisely so that staff and governors can evaluate more easily the expected impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.

The Chair of the Governing Body is working well to improve governors' ability to hold the school to account. Governors have audited their skills and recognise there are gaps in their knowledge, particularly with regard to the use of school performance data and how well West Croft pupils achieve relative to other schools nationally. The Governing Body are not yet familiar with the information presented in the School Data Dashboard and how it can be used to support improvement. They have commissioned the local authority to conduct an external review of their effectiveness and improve this aspect of their work.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- ensure that actions taken to improve the school are measured against clearly defined success criteria linked closely to pupils' attainment and progress
- use the Ofsted survey report, *School governance: Learning from the best* and planned training to support the work of the governing body in evaluating the performance of the school and holding school leaders to account.

## **External support**

The school has benefitted from good external support from the local authority. This has included regular monitoring by the school improvement officer. Immediate impact can be seen in the quality of the school's action planning to improve pupils' attainment and progress. Good use is being made of the Local Leader in Education to support improvement in the quality of teaching. The school also draws on support from the Devon Schools Library Service and a good start has been made in raising the profile of reading in the school and its community.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Devon and as below.

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**