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30 April 2013

Mrs Debra Whiting  
Headteacher  
North Denes Junior School  
Jellicoe Road  
Great Yarmouth  
NR30 4HF

Dear Mrs Whiting

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to North Denes Junior School, Norfolk local authority.**

Following my visit to your school on 29 April 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 on 15 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit I had meetings with you, and the chair of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. School improvement and action plans were evaluated. I visited classes in all year groups in order to evaluate pupils' learning.

**Context**

You joined the school just before the last inspection. You are also headteacher of a nearby 'good' school. The two schools are in partnership.

## **Main findings**

Before the last inspection, together with the deputy headteacher, you had made a good start in identifying the issues facing the school. As a consequence the pace of change has been rapid. The school is benefitting from the increasingly close relationship with its partner school. Expertise and good practice are shared well.

Pupils are now making better progress. In all year groups, standards have improved since the last inspection and are now close to national average. Pupils demonstrate a willingness to learn and apply themselves well. In those classes in which planning allows flexible and independent learning, pupils make good progress and become capable learners. This is best developed in the two Year 6 classes. Progress accelerates in Year 6 as a result. Gaps between the progress made by boys and girls are minimal, as they are with all other groups of pupils.

The monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress has developed very quickly. Good practice introduced from the partner school means that all teachers now assess progress systematically and regularly. This assessment is accurate and now gives the school a clear picture of how well pupils are doing. Most teachers use this information well in the planning and management of their classes. This enables most pupils to learn well.

You have made changes to the school's curriculum. These have been aimed at improving literacy teaching in all year groups. Teachers have undergone training and a school-wide literacy policy has been implemented. This has included a renewed emphasis on homework, guided reading, and marking that clearly identifies the next steps for improvement. These changes are too recent for a significant impact on standards to be apparent, although early indications are that they are being successful.

Self-assessment is accurate and is realistic about the problems facing the school. Improvement plans and their actions are clear and have appropriate timescales. Teaching is monitored systematically and accurately. The school has correctly identified areas for improvement and teachers have undertaken professional development to address them, for example in the accurate assessment of pupils' progress. However the lesson observation process places too much emphasis on the activities of teachers rather than their impact on learning. This means that it is difficult for teachers and leaders to judge whether teachers always pitch lessons at the right level to ensure that all pupils learn.

Governors have had training in areas identified at the last inspection. These include the analysis of school performance data and the wider responsibilities of their role. They now challenge the school more frequently about important aspects of its performance, for example the regularity and quality of homework. However governors do not set sufficiently precise targets and timescales for improvement.

This means that they are unable to monitor progress towards targets accurately and are too dependent on information provided by school leaders.

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

- Ensure that the good lesson planning practice seen in Year 6 is shared with all teachers.
- Redesign the lesson observation system to give an accurate evaluation of the learning taking place in class.
- Ensure that governors set precise targets for school performance so that progress towards them can be accurately monitored.

### **External support**

The school has benefitted from local authority intervention advisor support for vulnerable groups, and from development sessions on marking. Since the last inspection the school has utilised some independent external support for the development of its literacy curriculum. It has gained extensively from its close association with the partner school

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**