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7 June 2013

Jackie Irwin  
Headteacher  
Engaines Primary School  
St Osyth Road East  
Little Clacton  
Clacton-on-Sea  
CO16 9PH

Dear Ms Irwin

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Engaines Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 27 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings to discuss the action taken since the last inspection were held with you and other senior leaders, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of the school which is sponsoring Engaines Primary School's conversion to academy status. The school improvement plan and the school's lesson observation records were evaluated. Brief visits were made to several classrooms to see pupils at work. The school provided its latest assessment summaries for each year group.

## **Context**

You took up your post as headteacher in September 2012. Since the previous inspection, a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed. Five teachers will be leaving the school at the end of term and replacements have been appointed, including two early years specialists and a new Key Stage 1 leader. In September 2013, the school is due to convert to academy status within a multi-academy trust, sponsored by Powers Hall Junior School, Witham.

## **Main findings**

As headteacher, you are providing a strong drive for improvement. Since the inspection, the school has been increasing the accuracy of its assessments by working with other schools to gain a shared understanding of the standards expected at each level. Regular pupil progress meetings are held to discuss with class teachers the progress of each pupil and to hold teachers to account for their pupils' results. Lessons are regularly observed and useful feedback is provided to the teachers concerned about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching. However, the feedback does not always provide enough subject-specific detail on how to teach the lesson topic better.

Staff are now encouraged to share good practice by observing each other's lessons and by collectively looking at pupils' work from different year-groups. They have had several opportunities to work with successful practitioners from other schools, leading to steady improvements in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Additional training on teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) is providing a smoother progression for pupils in reading and writing as they move up the school. These changes have created a much more collegiate approach to school improvement, with all staff playing their part.

You have introduced concise summaries of pupils' attainment and progress which are easily understood by governors and school staff. As a result, there is a shared understanding of the need to:

- improve the identification and support for pupils with special educational needs
- raise attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1
- improve pupils' progress in mathematics across the school
- speed up progress in reading and writing in Years 4 and 5.

The school's improvement plan includes realistic proposals to tackle these issues and some impact is already evident. However, the plan does not have specific enough targets for future levels of attainment or clear enough delegation of responsibility for each aspect of the plan.

The school has made good arrangements to recruit staff for September, including some experienced teachers and three newly qualified teachers. Changes are being planned to reduce the number of mixed age classes. A strong mentoring programme is being developed to support new members of the leadership team.

The governing body is working with the local authority to review its own effectiveness. Training is being provided to help governors understand their roles and members of the governing body are now better informed about the performance of the school. The clear information that governors receive from you, and through their own increased involvement in monitoring the work of the school, means that governors are now better placed to ask challenging questions.

Senior leaders, governors and the academy sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- set specific targets for each year-group specifying the attainment levels expected by the end of each Key Stage for progress to be considered good
- breaking these targets down to provide milestones for the progress required each term to reach these targets
- identify which of the new leadership team will have primary responsibility for each aspect of the improvement plan
- ensure that teachers receive enough subject-specific detail on how to teach lesson topics better.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its first section 5 inspection as an academy. In view of the forthcoming conversion to academy status, any such support will be part of the academies monitoring programme. The school has agreed to provide regular updates on pupils' progress.

### **External support**

The school is being very well supported by the headteacher and senior staff of Powers Hall Junior School, its future academy sponsor. This link was brokered by an adviser who had been appointed by the local authority to support the headteacher during her first year in post. The adviser has now been engaged directly by the school to continue to work with the headteacher and the staff from the academy sponsor. This partnership is providing good strategic leadership for the school. Support for the governing body from the local authority is increasing its capacity to hold the leadership to account.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**