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Joan Dear  
Headteacher  
Frinton-on-Sea Primary School  
Fifth Avenue  
Frinton-on-Sea  
CO13 9LQ

Dear Ms Dear

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Frinton-on-Sea Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 8 March 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 staff, including two due to take up post shortly, and members of the governing body. A representative of the local authority was consulted by telephone. 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 assessments for each year group.

### **Context**

Two teaching assistants have left and been replaced since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher left at Easter. Her class is being covered through a temporary appointment, but not her leadership role. Another class is being taught on a temporary basis by a recently retired teacher who knows the pupils well. The current special needs coordinator is new to the role and is undergoing specialist training. Another teacher is leaving in July. Three teachers have been appointed to start in September, including two deputy headteachers. This has necessitated a reshuffle of

leadership responsibilities, with four of the senior and middle leaders taking on new roles. The governing body is currently holding elections to replace two parent governors and a staff governor who resigned recently.

## **Main findings**

The departure of the deputy headteacher at Easter has left the school with a temporarily reduced leadership capacity. Your priority has necessarily been to make new appointments, but this has absorbed time and energy that otherwise could have been used to tackle the issues identified in the last inspection. As a result, there has been limited progress in making the recommended improvements in teaching and leadership.

The last inspection found that the school leadership was not fully in command of data management. There had been too much reliance on external expertise to analyse assessment data and to set suitable targets, leaving school leaders a little uncertain of how best to use the available information to set targets. This is still the case, but the newly appointed deputy headteachers will bring additional expertise in September. On a more positive note, the regular pupil progress meetings that you have with each class teacher are helping to focus attention on pupils that need additional support, and are helping to speed up their progress.

The school's attainment records show that pupils in Years 3, 5 and 6 have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics since beginning Key Stage 2. However, the school recognises that these pupils did not reach their full potential in Key Stage 1, so the extra progress has partly gone towards making up for this. Standards are therefore broadly average in Key Stage 2. The two exceptions are that standards in literacy are below average in Year 4, but above average in year 5. For pupils currently in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, standards are above average, giving them a secure platform for the future.

Since the last inspection, you have checked pupils' books on two occasions. The checks in May showed many of the same problems with marking that were noted in the last inspection. Subsequent checks show some improvement as teachers gain a better understanding of what is expected, but marking is still not consistently good. This is partly because the guidance to teachers on how to improve their practice is not direct enough. It is phrased in terms of what pupils need to do better rather than what teachers need to do better.

Feedback to staff after lesson observations is quite detailed, but sometimes it is too particular to the lesson observed. The advice is very helpful in indicating how to teach the same lesson better in the future, but does not draw out enough general principles that can be applied to other lessons in the same or different subjects.

An external review of the governing body has been undertaken since the inspection. This has helped governors to see the need for additional sources of information, for

example by direct observation of the school and checks on pupils' books. Governors were disappointed to find that the school required improvement and are now asking additional challenging questions. They are determined that the school should be good at its next inspection. They understand that the short-term staffing issues have contributed to the slow start. With the leadership team being expanded in September, they will be demanding rapid improvements in the new term.

The school is not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Senior leaders and governors should take further action to:

- implement more rapidly the recommendations from the inspection in March
- ensure that they have a good understanding of pupils' attainment and progress, based on accurate information, so they can monitor the rate of improvement against the clear targets to be set
- organise opportunities for governors to observe pupil progress meetings and other school activities designed to improve teaching and learning
- identify further improvements in teaching, for example by enrolling on one of the Better English and Mathematics conferences being run by Ofsted, or using the Ofsted professional development materials
- develop partnerships with a wider range of schools that provide strong role models of leadership, both at headteacher level and for the newly appointed senior and middle leaders.

Ofsted will carry out a further visit in the new academic year and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. The school has agreed to provide regular updates on pupils' progress.

### **External support**

The school has few active partnerships with other schools to support leaders or teachers. Since the inspection, the school has accepted the local authority's invitation to join the 'Getting to Good' project, which provides training for school leaders. The local authority is monitoring the school closely and providing support in mathematics and English. It has already helped the governing body to be better at holding the school to account and it plans a full review of the school next term. The school has also worked with an external consultant, who has played a major role in establishing the school's system for tracking pupils' progress.

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**