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19 July 2013

Ms Gill Moody  
Headteacher  
Whitstable Junior School  
Oxford Street  
Whitstable  
CT5 1DB

Dear Ms Moody,

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Whitstable Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 July 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 in May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the Chair and another member of the Governing Body as well as a representative from the local authority. I evaluated a range of school documentation including the strategic action plan, the school self-evaluation summary, data relating to pupils' attainment and progress as well as minutes of recent governing body meetings and their own development plan. You took me on a tour of the school and we made brief visits to a range of classes.

### **Main findings**

Senior leaders, the governing body and the local authority had already recognised and were addressing the decline in standards prior to the inspection of May 2013. As a result of rigorous self-evaluation a range of actions were planned and taken. These have already given rise to significant improvement. End of Key Stage 2 assessment results for 2013 show a steep improvement in levels of attainment and rates of

progress when compared with the previous year. It is particularly pleasing to note the sizeable proportion of able pupils who gained the higher levels. Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs as well as those known to be entitled to the pupil premium funding has been comprehensively reviewed. As a result, adult support is now more effectively directed. Additional interventions, notably to improve reading show that targeted pupils are making swift gains in learning.

The strategic action plan articulates an ambitious vision for the school and outlines precisely what will be done by whom and when, in order to secure improvement. The 'Provision, Assessment and Monitoring Cycle' exemplifies the systematic approach and rigour of leadership in ensuring that changes made are effective and sustained in the long-term. The core group of governors has begun to meet regularly with the senior leadership team to drive and monitor progress. A powerful sense of purpose and ambition is widely shared across the staff and the governing body.

The very high expectations of teachers have been made explicit. For example, training has been put in place so that teachers can more accurately identify the next steps every pupil needs to make in their learning and how to plan lessons to meet these different needs. Lessons are observed regularly and feedback is given on teaching and on the progress made by pupils. Individual teachers have received additional support to improve their planning in English and mathematics. Teachers are now tracking and analysing their own pupils' progress data, prior to the formal review meetings. This has generated a culture of greater ambition and accountability for the progress pupils make. Data is widely shared and teachers are eager to learn from one another. Pupils currently in Year 5 have made good progress this year. However, they are carrying a legacy of underachievement from weaker teaching and slower progress in the past. These pupils need to make rapid progress throughout their time in Year 6 if they are to reach their targets for attainment and progress Key Stage 2. The gravity of this situation was discussed at some length with you, with governors and with the local authority.

Essential actions required for improvement are well underway. These include: shared and clearly understood priorities and responsibilities for improvement, a focus on the teaching of 'number' in mathematics, frequent opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge to problem-solving and real-life activities, a highly systematic approach to the teaching of early reading, training for all teachers and teaching assistants as well as individualised programmes of development, effective support for the leaders of mathematics and English and the closer involvement of pupils in reviewing their own progress and next steps.

The Chair of the Governing Body brings great expertise to the role. Under her leadership, governance has been restructured and is quickly becoming a strength of the school. Governors now possess a clear understanding of the extent of their roles and responsibilities. Their development plan and monitoring timetable dovetail

precisely with the strategic action plan. Governors receive regular information on all aspects of the school's work and know the school in detail. The core group in particular are playing a strategic part in driving improvement. Over time, the governing body has not held the headteacher sufficiently to account. Discussion with governors during this monitoring visit evidences that an appropriate degree of challenge now exists.

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

- ensure that senior leaders give themselves time to 'stand back' and reflect on progress at regular intervals to confirm that the planned next steps continue to be the right ones
- review the progress made by the oldest pupils in school even more frequently than others to ensure their work consistently challenges them in order that they make maximum progress.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. We discussed and agreed that I will revisit the school in approximately six months.

### **External support**

Local authority support has been extensive and proportional to the needs of the school. The improvement adviser knows the school, its strengths and areas for improvement in precise detail. As a result, exactly the right advice, guidance and challenge have been provided. Examples of support include facilitation of the governing body review, supported lesson observations and professional development for teachers. School leaders and governors have drawn effectively on this support and are now ready for the planned reduction in monitoring from fortnightly to every six weeks.

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

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**