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20 September 2013

Simon Fisher  
Headteacher  
Firside Junior School  
Middleton's Lane  
Hellesdon  
NR6 5NF

Dear Mr Fisher

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

Following my visit to your school on 19 September 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- provide further training for teachers to ensure their assessments of pupils' writing are accurate.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The action plan was evaluated. I also had a tour of the school, observed some well-planned opportunities for pupils to work with each other to solve problems in class and looked at their work in English and mathematics. I also reviewed the latest monitoring reports by yourself, the governing body and local authority related to the performance of the school.

## **Main findings**

Under your clear and well-directed leadership the staff are quickly tackling the issues from the last inspection. Effective training is ensuring teachers plan challenging work for the more-able pupils and is leading to better pupil achievement. Your monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and well-organised. You evaluate learning well and this provides a good starting point for discussion with staff about how they might improve their teaching further. This regular monitoring is eliminating inconsistencies between classes and year groups. The regular involvement of subject leaders for literacy and numeracy as part of the monitoring process is building the capacity of school leadership well. My scrutiny of books shows that teachers' marking is ensuring that pupils are very aware about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further. The marking seen in Years 5 and 6 books is a particular strength and an example of best practice.

Better use of data is being made by yourself and other school leaders to monitor progress of pupils across the school. For example, the subject leaders for literacy and numeracy make good use of this data to analyse variations in progress in order to identify those pupils who need extra support. However, my analysis of pupils' books against the current teacher assessments indicates that not all of the assessments in writing are accurate. They are accurate in mathematics. These inaccuracies show that further work is needed to ensure all school leaders can make best use of this data to accelerate rates of pupils' achievement further.

The detailed and comprehensive action plan provides you with an effective structure with which to push forward rapid improvement. It clearly identifies who will lead each action, when each should be completed and who will monitor the impact of these actions. The linking of specific targets linked to pupil progress and timescales ensures that governors and yourself can measure the progress the school is making and challenge weaker performance in teaching and learning.

My discussion with several governors confirms that they have a good understanding of what the school needs to do next to address the issues from the last inspection. They are well organised and actively involved in monitoring the impact of school initiatives and the performance of leaders and staff.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

## **External support**

It is good that you have quickly utilised the support of local authority improvement officers to support your further training of teachers. I note that you have also initiated stronger links with another local school to support your drive for improvement. However, further support is needed to develop the necessary skills and expertise of teachers in making accurate assessments of pupils' writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**