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Mrs C Knight & Mrs S Uff
Headteacher
Jolesfield CofE Primary School
Littleworth Lane
Partridge Green
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RH13 8JJ

Dear Mrs Knight and Mrs Uff

Special measures monitoring inspection of Jolesfield CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and a representative from the diocese of Chichester. I also had telephone conversations with two representatives from the local authority. I checked aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures, and we visited every classroom in the school briefly. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body have stepped down and new governors have been elected to these posts. One additional governor has been appointed by the local authority, and there are plans to appoint another new governor as a representative of the diocese. Discussions have begun about the school becoming an academy, and possible sponsors. Three new

teachers have joined the school, including an assistant headteacher, and a temporary teacher funded by the local authority to support intervention strategies in Years 5 and 6. Strong links are being established with a local outstanding school, St Lawrence CE Primary School in Hurstpierpoint.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You, the governing body, the local authority and the Chichester diocese all show commitment to bringing about rapid and secure improvements in outcomes for pupils. Previous faults are acknowledged, and there is a manifest sense of commitment to moving on, and emerging from special measures as a good school.

A number of useful strategies have already been put in place in response to the findings of the previous inspection, including daily phonics (the sounds letters make) teaching for pupils in Reception and Years 1–3, spelling, grammar and punctuation sessions for Years 4–6, and daily guided reading for Years 1–6. A review of the quality of teachers' lesson planning has taken place and a baseline has been established for what constitutes effective practice. The new assistant headteacher has provided useful training in phonics to all teachers and teaching assistants, and some targeted support is planned as a follow-up. There are no clear plans in place to closely monitor the impact of the training and the consistency of its application, and respond to individual staff's ongoing training needs. A new marking policy has been implemented and all staff are clear about the expectations of them to provide high-quality, frequent feedback to pupils, to enable them to know exactly the next steps in their learning. There are also clearly expressed requirements of how pupils' work should be presented, and some signs of improvement already as a consequence.

The school's action planning covers all of the essential areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Targets, and interim measures of progress toward them, are appropriate and monitoring strategies are clear. You understand the need to refine aspects continually, as the plan is worked through. The local authority's statement of action sets out priorities usefully and there are good links to the school action plan. However, the statement of action is predicated on the school becoming an academy by September 2014 and plans after that time diminish significantly in detail and focus. The local authority has agreed to revisit the plan in spring 2014 with a view to extending it in case the need arises for it to maintain responsibility and support for the school in autumn 2014, and quite possibly beyond.

The impact of the action plans is monitored by half-termly local authority-led meetings, one of which has already taken place. This first meeting was useful and there was agreement reached on the next steps. Everyone agreed that future meetings will be much more sharply focused on evaluating the outcomes of actions

in the planning documents, in terms of the impact they are having on pupils' achievements, and setting short-term targets of increasing levels of challenge in response.

The partnership with St Lawrence CE Primary has already given teachers opportunities to see outstanding teaching and learning. While this helps to motivate staff and set expectations appropriately high, an opportunity was missed to begin staff working on their own specific training needs by focusing on particular aspects of the strong teaching seen. This was because work on establishing individual training plans did not begin before the visits.

This partnership, and some useful local authority support, have also enabled teachers to check the validity and reliability of their assessments of pupils' achievement. This is a very important activity because accurate assessments underpin the strategy to improve the quality of teaching in the school through monitoring its impact on the progress pupils make. The systems in place to monitor pupils' progress are now being used well, following good support from the local authority and the skills of one co-headteacher in particular. There has already been a round of meetings with teachers discussing what the information is saying about the progress of different groups and individuals in each class. The next series of meetings will involve all teachers undertaking this analysis for themselves and comparing their judgements and insights with one of you, as a training exercise.

Work to establish mechanisms to check the quality of judgements about teaching has just begun, with one co-headteacher having observed lessons with local authority staff so far. The school recognises the vital importance of these judgements being accurate and incisive, and there are plans to accelerate this training in the near future, while maintaining a balance between this activity and class-teaching commitments.

The co-headteacher arrangement has undergone several changes in nature and personnel over the last few years. Governors, the local authority and the diocese have correctly identified the need to clarify the organisation of the leadership of the school as a matter of urgency, to ensure that developments can be managed quickly and efficiently, and their impact can be gauged accurately and speedily.

Governors are beginning to have a much clearer understanding of the significance of their role and the need for them to hold the school much more strongly to account. They are under no illusions about the urgency around them acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to do this, and they have used the local authority intervention provided already, well. There has already been some training in the use of school performance data. Some skill-auditing has already taken place, and some roles have

changed, but no formal and strategic review of governance has been planned yet. Governors are keen to become more involved in the continual evaluation of the school's responses to issues on the action plan. They are considering, for example, playing a role in evaluating the impact of medium and long-term responses to issues in the behaviour log, and monitoring the impact of the new marking policy by meeting with groups of pupils.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

- The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose, with the proviso that it is revisited in spring 2014 when the timescale for the school becoming an academy is clearer.
- The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection, in consultation and by agreement on an individual basis with me.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex, and the director of education in the Diocese of Chichester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector