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17 October 2013

Michelle Walsh  
Headteacher  
Five Ways Primary School  
Langholm Drive  
Heath Hayes  
WS12 2EZ

Dear Mrs Walsh

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Five Ways Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 16 October 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 July 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:

- make sure that all teachers provide more-able pupils with suitably challenging activities in different subjects
- ensure that once weaknesses are identified, all teachers make the required changes quickly
- present governors with concise information about the progress of different groups of pupils so that they are able to check if the actions of senior leaders are helping all pupils make fast enough progress.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, and four members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A telephone discussion was held with a local authority representative. The school

improvement plan was evaluated. During this visit, you and the deputy headteacher joined me on brief visits to some classes in each year group. We talked to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of writing, mathematics and topic work. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the latest information about pupils' achievement and feedback to teachers following lesson observations.

## **Main findings**

You are responding appropriately to the weaknesses identified in the recent inspection. Pupils' work from across the school shows that teachers are getting better at giving pupils more suitably challenging mathematical activities. Pupils now have regular opportunities to use what they already know about numbers to solve complex mathematical problems. During my discussions with pupils, they were keen to talk about the different techniques they were using to find the right answer. 'Maths problems make us work hard', commented one pupil. In a few lessons we visited, more-able pupils stated that their work was 'easy'. This was because they were asked to complete the same work as their classmates before moving onto more challenging work.

Teachers' marking has improved. It is particularly effective in Years 3, 5 and 6. In these year groups teachers provide pupils with precise feedback. They also ensure that pupils have sufficient time to correct any errors that they have made. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 are giving pupils the chance to develop reading and writing skills across different subjects as confirmed by a review of pupils' work. In contrast, pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not have sufficient opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in a range of subjects.

You, together with other senior leaders are ensuring that pupils who are not making fast enough progress are receiving the additional support they need. When observing teachers, senior leaders provide teachers with some helpful guidance and identify where further improvements are required. However, you do not always ensure that all teachers make the required changes quickly enough. For instance, we found that some teachers, such as in Years 1 and 2, are continuing to use worksheets which require limited responses. This is preventing pupils in these year groups from writing at length and developing their ideas.

Members of the governing body are keen to do all they can to help the school move quickly towards 'good'. Governors have continued to ask senior leaders searching questions about the quality of teaching and the actions being taken to raise pupils' achievement. They are meeting this week to set up a 'Focus Group'. This group will meet regularly and check that the actions senior leaders are taking are having beneficial impact on pupils' learning and the quality of teaching. You provide governors with a range of information about pupils' progress. However, this does not focus enough on the progress of different groups. This makes it difficult for governors to check if different groups of pupils, such as boys or the more-able, are making good progress.

The school improvement plan has been revised since the inspection. The actions within the plan are suitable and strongly focused on raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching. However, the plan does not specify the specific actions that will be taken to close further the gap between the achievement of boys and girls in the school.

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**

The local authority is providing the right level of support and challenge. Through the 'core group' meetings, local authority advisers are helping senior leaders and governors to focus on the areas requiring improvement and to prioritise the actions that need to be taken. Although very recent, teachers are already benefiting from the mathematics training they have received from a local authority consultant. This is contributing to improvements with the teaching of mathematics. You are working with a local leader in education and senior leaders from a local successful school in order to further strength leadership. This is helping you and other senior leaders to improve your systems for checking pupils' progress and the work of staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**