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19 November 2013

Paul Morton  
Headteacher  
Romans Field School  
Shenley Road  
Milton Keynes  
MK3 7AW

Dear Mr Morton

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Romans Field School**

Following my visit to your school on 19 November 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:

- involve all senior staff in the monitoring and training plan in order to improve teaching and hold teachers to account for increasing the rate of pupils' progress
- track pupils' progress more frequently and regularly, measuring the steps of progress pupils make, so that all staff and governors have a clear view of achievement
- ensure that the outstanding vacancies on the governing body are filled as soon as possible.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, a representative of the local authority and the Chair and Vice-chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since

the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. You accompanied me on a tour of the school, including the residential provision, and we visited lessons in all year groups.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection in June, two teachers have left the school. One teaching group is currently being taught by a long-term supply teacher. A new Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors were appointed and started in September 2013.

## **Main findings**

Following the section 5 inspection that judged the school to require improvement, senior leaders and governors agreed that expectations of pupils were too low. School leaders and staff are beginning to promote a greater focus on learning to help pupils to catch up and close the gaps in their skills and knowledge. School leaders have rightly implemented a more systematic method of setting pupils accurate and appropriately ambitious academic targets. The school has now adopted a more detailed method of recording pupils' steps of progress. Meetings to discuss pupils' levels of attainment and progress now take place regularly. However, these meetings are not held frequently enough and class teachers are not yet taking full responsibility for ensuring that gaps in pupils' learning are identified and tackled quickly.

The headteacher and governors are also correctly focusing on improving teaching and the management of pupils' behaviour. Lessons observed during the monitoring visit confirmed that pupils are usually engaged and interested in their learning. The books seen during the visit were marked according to the new marking policy with clear advice for pupils to act upon. The headteacher has scrutinised the quality of teachers' marking recently and has noted where pupils are following the guidance of their teachers and improving their work. However this good practice is not yet consistent across the school.

School leaders have introduced a new phonics programme to help pupils acquire the necessary understanding of letters and sounds. However, a few members of staff are not yet secure with the programme and need further training to ensure that pupils are taught phonics at the right level for their ability and academic targets.

Pupils are well-cared-for and staff have a deep understanding of the circumstances that can make pupils vulnerable. School leaders have taken steps to review some of the ways in which they manage challenging behaviour and ensure that all pupils feel safe. Leaders are in the process of setting up an inclusion room for the short-term removal of pupils from lessons if their behaviour disrupts the learning of others. Other initiatives include the creation of a quiet area for pupils outside, increased levels of supervision at breaktimes and lunchtimes and more effective use of

rewards for good behaviour. The impact of these initiatives has not yet been evaluated.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher observe teaching and evaluate pupils' progress but other senior leaders do not have enough opportunities to model good teaching or closely check the quality of teachers' work. Senior leaders visit lessons and tour the school regularly, but a high proportion of their work is focused on supervising pupils' behaviour, with not enough attention paid to improving teaching and learning. As yet, there is no planned programme of training for teachers and teaching assistants to support the areas for improvement and the impact of previous training has not been evaluated with sufficient precision.

The new Chair and Vice Chair of Governors now provide effective challenge for the school. They both have valuable leadership expertise in a special education setting. An appropriate committee structure is in place, but there are still outstanding vacancies in the governing body resulting in a slower pace of change than is desirable. Governors have commissioned an external review to be undertaken by a national leader of governance.

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 had already identified the school as a high priority before the section 5 inspection, noting recent low levels of attainment and progress. The school improvement partner has provided helpful support with the school improvement plan, advice about an appropriate phonics and literacy programme and links with local good schools. The school improvement partner has also observed teaching and provided useful challenge and advice for senior leaders and governors. The local authority will be conducting a full review of the work of the school, including an audit of current provision, the impact of annual reviews, an evaluation of teaching and pupils' progress and the management of pupils' behaviour.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**