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15 January 2014

Mrs Christine Ramm  
Headteacher  
Mowbray First School  
Stakeford Lane  
Choppington  
Northumberland  
NE62 5HQ

Dear Mrs Ramm

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mowbray First School**

Following my visit to your school on 14 January, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the local authority are not taking urgent action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- Finalise the post-ofsted action plan to include more measurable targets and regular milestones against which governors can check the impact of actions.
- Carry out the review of governance as a matter of urgency so that governors can better-understand their role in driving the school forward quickly
- Hasten plans for teachers see and learn from outstanding practice in other schools.
- Ensure steering group meetings set up by the local authority provide a strong platform to challenge the headteacher and governors on the impact of their actions, the urgency with which they are carrying them out, and to identify areas where further support can be provided and by whom.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body, a senior adviser from Northumberland school

improvement service and a National Leader of Education (NLE) from Tyne Valley Teaching School Alliance (TVTSA), to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I looked at a range of documents including the post-Ofsted action plan, information on pupils' achievements and current progress and outcomes from lesson observations conducted jointly by you and a senior leader from an outstanding school.

## **Context**

Some new governors joined the governing body following the inspection. A new local authority school improvement adviser was attached to the school in November 2013.

## **Main findings**

The post-Ofsted action plan does not take full account of the recommendations in the Inspection Report. Not enough targets are well-defined which is hampering governors' ability to check that the actions identified are, or will drive the improvements required. The review of governance has been slow off the mark; it is not starting till the end of January. The plan does not make it clear when it will be completed or what impact this will have. This is delaying the development of the skills governors will need to check and challenge the impact of actions taken by leaders and those external partners who are supporting the school. The submission for financial support from the National College of Teaching and Leadership has just this week been partially agreed. A Steering Group comprising local authority officers, you and the Chair of Governors has been set up and met on the 18<sup>th</sup> November. At that time the action plan was not robust enough to enable challenging discussions to take place.

Leaders and governors took urgent action to ensure the school's website meets the Department for Education's requirements. The website now provides parents with accurate and up-to-date information. The post-Ofsted action plan is detailed and identifies a range of appropriate actions and clear timescales for completion. The headteacher and senior team have instigated many actions in the plan but most are too new to have had any impact yet. For example, detailed assessment and tracking information about pupils' progress in lessons is now available to teachers. They have yet to use this information consistently to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils. You quickly sought advice to check your own skills and train other leaders in observing teaching. Lessons jointly observed by you and headteacher from an outstanding school in the North-East accurately identified that some still require improvement. The lesson observations from the visiting headteacher did not identify clearly enough the impact of teaching on the progress pupils made in lessons. Consequently this work has not helped the school as well as it should. The National Leader of Education from TVTSA is aware of this and has plans to carry out joint observations with you and other leaders in the coming weeks.

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

## PROTECT-INSPECTION



return later in the spring term to check improvements and observe teachers with you to see the impact of your work to improve teaching and pupils' progress.

### **External support**

The National Leader for Education (NLE) has been brokered by the local authority to help you drive improvement in the school and has agreed to resource the funding shortfall from the National College. Despite the delay in securing funding, NLE support has been timely and useful. The NLE has worked with you on improving the action plan and sharpening teachers' performance management arrangements. He also met with the governing body in late November to discuss their role in the performance management and use of data. Teachers' performance management plans are now linked to the achievements of pupils more robustly. As yet, there is little discernible impact from this work.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Families, Adults and Children's Services for Northumberland.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**