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Saeed Hussain  
Headteacher  
George Mitchell School  
Farmer Road  
Leyton  
London  
E10 5DN

Dear Mr Hussain

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to George Mitchell School**

Following my visit to your school on 20 January 2014, 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 and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- Sharpen the improvement plan so that the impact of actions can be fully measured.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities, particularly in the primary phase, in order to ensure senior and middle leaders have the necessary capacity to bring about the required improvements.

## **Evidence**

During the visit I met with you, senior leaders, four members of the governing body, the school improvement officer representing the local authority and a group of students from Key stages 2, 3 and 4. I toured the primary school with you and the head of the primary school, spoke with pupils and looked at their work books. Additionally, a range of documents including action plans, pupil progress data, school monitoring evaluations, and professional development plans were scrutinised.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes to staffing. A new substantive headteacher started work at the school in January 2014.

## **Main findings**

At the time of this inspection, you had been in post eight days. Despite an inheritance of complex issues around staffing and accommodation, you have quickly grasped the extent of the school's weaknesses. You have a clear determination to make improvements and good understanding of the need to take urgent action. You are aware that inconsistencies in practice and accountability remain. You recognise that achievement remains low. In particular, pupils in Key Stage 2, have some way to go before they can catch up on the skills and concepts they have missed in the past because of weak teaching. Scrutiny of some pupils' workbooks reveals pupils' work is marked but it is not of consistently good quality. At best, teachers link their written comments closely to what they wanted pupils to achieve. Sometimes, teachers write comments such as 'well done,' when more precise comments would give pupils advice on how to improve further and what to focus on next. Furthermore, some books reveal evidence of incomplete work, with a number of examples of pupils not getting beyond copying out the learning objectives and date. Pupils are articulate and polite to each other, staff and visitors. They are proud of their school. Whilst behaviour is good around the school, there are inconsistencies in lessons, especially when pupils are not challenged or engaged.

Assessment systems are becoming established. The importance of moderation has been recognised and the newly appointed assessment leader has appropriately had early conversations about assessing pupils' work. However, due to previous inconsistencies, the school is still establishing a secure baseline from which to track pupils' progress. You are aware of the need to refine the monitoring programme to include a greater focus on what pupils of different abilities are learning in lessons and to increase the emphasis on identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning from scrutiny of pupils' work. The pace of improvement has been slow in the autumn term and you acknowledge a more rigorous and urgent approach is needed as there is still a great deal to be done. For example, urgent changes need to be made in order to ensure the senior and middle leadership team have the necessary capacity to bring about the required improvements.

All the areas for development from the previous inspection have been fully incorporated into school planning. However, some arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the action plan are not specific. Additionally, there is a lack of precision about success criteria and intended outcomes. For example, the plans does not indicate how senior leaders and the governing body will check that the school's actions are making a difference to pupils' learning and the quality of teaching. The Chair of Governors and the local authority representative are aware of the shortcomings in the plan

Governors are in the process of changing the way they work to link more closely to the priorities in the school action plan. This will provide a clear focus for their regular visits to the school. They support staff training and are clear that they want to see records of what difference the training is making.

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 appropriate support to improve teachers' assessment of pupils and build the capacity of leaders. Further support is now required to accelerate improvements in the quality of teaching and improve pupil outcomes particularly, in the primary phase.

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

Yours sincerely

Kekshan Salaria

**Her Majesty's Inspector**