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24 January 2014

Mrs Jackie Burns  
Headteacher  
The Roebuck School  
Inkerman Street  
Ashton  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR2 2BN

Dear Mrs Burns

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Roebuck School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 November 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:

- increase the rate of improvement in mathematics.
- ensure that when teachers and leaders plan for learning they always consider the progress pupils are making alongside their attainment.
- share responsibility for planned actions between leaders to ensure that improvement is rapid and consistent.

**Evidence**

Meetings were held with you, subject leaders for English and mathematics, the co-ordinator for special educational needs and the Early Years leader, pupils, the Chair

and vice-chair of Governors and a representative of the local authority. The school's action plan and other documents were evaluated. Samples of work from pupils in Years 2, 5 and 6 were reviewed. Classrooms in the main school site were visited.

## **Context**

Five teaching assistants have been appointed. A parent governor and a co-opted governor have been appointed.

## **Main findings**

While teaching is improving, its quality is variable. Higher expectations of teachers by leaders have led to raised expectations of pupils. Targets for pupils' work now provide more detail and are more challenging. Pupils understand how to use their targets to help them improve. Detailed information on pupils' attainment is collected systematically and reviewed by leaders and teachers each half term. This information is used by teachers to plan additional teaching if pupils require extra challenge or are falling behind. However, it is not clear that this is as effective as possible as there is insufficient emphasis on the progress pupils are expected to make.

Rapid progress has been made in improving writing. Training has helped teachers to support pupils' writing. The timetable has been changed to make sure every pupil has an opportunity to write at length each week. Pupils in Years 2, 5 and 6 concentrate hard in their extended writing lessons and show pride in their work. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 present their written work well. Additional time has been allocated to develop pupils' skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. New resources are available to help pupils do this confidently. However, teachers' marking does not always comment on or correct work well enough to reinforce these basic skills. The teaching of letters and the sounds to children in Reception and Year 1 is now planned more effectively. Early indications are that children are learning faster as a result.

Improvement in mathematics has been slower than in writing. Daily sessions to practice pupils' mental mathematics have been introduced. Teachers report that pupils' speed when answering questions is improving. A new system for teaching calculations has been introduced but it is too early to know how well this is helping pupils. Pupils are able to apply mathematics in real life problems although they have infrequent opportunities to do so. Further training on high quality mathematics teaching is planned.

Leadership and management are more effective. Leaders, governors and local authority officers responded rapidly to the inspection findings to reshape existing priorities. The re-written school development plan provides a detailed and robust framework for improvement. Leaders have improved their skills and confidence through well targeted training. There is additional leadership capacity but this is not

used sufficiently to allow responsibility for the many improvement priorities to be shared. The systems to check on the quality of teaching have been reorganised. These focus on the weakest teaching but also check that all teachers are improving. Teachers are observing each other's lessons to share aspects of stronger teaching.

Key governors provide strong support and increasing challenge. Their expectations of leaders have been raised. They are robust in their approach to judging and rewarding teachers' performance. This is driving faster improvement. Governors are provided with more opportunities to be fully involved but not all are taking these opportunities. The new appointments to the Governing Body have increased the range of skills represented.

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 proving effective in its work with the school. Officers are providing good advice and clear challenge. The work of local authority consultants gives a good base for improvement in teaching. This work has included training, joint teaching of lessons and workshops with individual teachers. Further training is planned. Well planned links with two local outstanding schools are in place. These have enabled teachers to observe good and outstanding teaching and have the potential to improve leadership further.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and as below.

Yours sincerely

David Selby

### **Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [ [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk) ] – for academies