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11 February 2014

Ms Ellen Saville & Mr Simon Jones  
Co-opted Headteachers  
Riddings Junior School  
Church Street  
Riddings  
Alfreton, Derbyshire  
DE55 4BW

Dear Ms Saville & Mr Jones

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Riddings Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 10 February 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 December 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:

- improve the capacity of the governing body by:
  - organising an external review of governance
  - filling governor vacancies
  - making governor roles and responsibilities clear
  - undertaking further training regarding deepening understanding of the governing body's role
  - contributing to the school's action plan
  - drawing up its own action plan to prioritise the work of the governing body
  - developing ways in which they could consult with stakeholders to inform the school's work

- sharpen performance management targets to ensure that actions are measurable and drive improvement across all subjects and areas of the school's work
- reconsider the allocation of Pupil Premium funding and ensure that the expenditure is targeted at those pupils who are eligible for the funding and that any expenditure represents good value for money, which should be monitored and evaluated by the governing body
- develop the partnership with parents and carers to ensure that they extend their role in their children's learning and progress
- make links with a range of good and outstanding schools and practitioners to improve school leadership, including governance, and teaching.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with senior leaders, the co-ordinator for mathematics, the recently appointed headteacher who will join the school at the end of February, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. A tour of the school and all classrooms was undertaken with a senior leader. A sample of books from Years 4, 5 and 6 and a sample of reading records from Year 3 were scrutinised. The outcomes of the school's own monitoring activities in literacy and mathematics were discussed.

## **Context**

The substantive headteacher and the Year 5 class teacher, who was also the school's special educational needs co-ordinator, left the school at the end of the autumn term. Since January 2014, existing staff and regular supply staff have picked up additional teaching in Years 4 and 6 to cover leadership time for those sharing a co-opted headteacher role until the new headteacher joins the school later in February. There are currently two temporary full time teachers in Years 3 and 5 to cover the departure of one staff member and the planned absence of another.

## **Main findings**

The co-opted headteachers are both working very hard to sustain the work of the school alongside their teaching commitments in the absence of a substantive headteacher. This work has yet to have had any significant impact. They have taken initial steps to attempt to address some of the points for improvement required from the school inspection. As a result, the quality of the marking of pupils' work has begun to improve. It is too early for this to have impacted on raising pupils' achievement and progress. There is no policy for how the school will effectively develop the reading habits of pupils, and areas in school for storing books are not sufficiently enticing to readers. Therefore pupils are not reading as regularly or as well as they should.

Some monitoring of teaching has been undertaken, but there remain some general issues that have not been addressed, such as the effectiveness of planning, the quality of the activities, the work being well matched to the needs of pupils and the consistency of high expectations across all subjects. There has been no effective scrutiny of lesson planning and leaders have not considered the quality of the activities presented to pupils, to ensure these support learning sufficiently and provide enough challenge. Some pupils are repeating endless worksheets but are gaining little from them. In topic work, teachers' expectations are too low and opportunities are not taken to practise reading, writing at length and solving mathematical problems in a wide range of subjects.

Pupil progress reviews indicate that there is still too much variation in the performance of different groups of pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics. There has been too little analysis of the progress of pupils in each class or set across year groups to ensure parity.

The governing body lacks direction and urgency. It has been slow to get started on what it needs to do. It is not making enough use of key guidance to help steer its work and with fewer governors than there should be, the existing governors are stretched to cover all that is required of them. There has been no progress with arranging an external review of governance. Therefore the governing body is having too little impact on school effectiveness.

Targets given to teachers are weak; they do not clearly define expectations for staff or leaders and targets set are not measurable. Performance management is therefore not currently supporting school improvement. Pupil Premium funding is not being used wisely enough and the impact of the funding is not being adequately evaluated. Strategies taken so far to improve pupils' attendance have not been consistently effective. The school has not thought carefully enough about how it should positively tackle this.

The school's action plan was written by the deputy headteacher and a representative of the local authority. Although this was shared with other members of staff and governors in draft form; there is a lack of ownership of the document and staff and governors have not sufficiently considered the implications of the plan for their work. Leaders and governors are not clear enough of their priorities and the actions they should take. Consequently, too few improvements in leadership and teaching have taken place to ensure the school progresses upon the journey to becoming a good school.

Due to the insufficiency of the actions being taken by the staff and the governing body, and because it was not possible to meet with the full governing body, HMI will return to the school to do so as soon as possible. Ofsted may carry out further visits and will provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

## **External support**

The school has been receptive to the advice of the local authority advisers but this has not begun to make a significant impact on the school's progress. The school has, to date, not sufficiently drawn on the support of any other external partners.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne

**Her Majesty's Inspector**