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25 February 2014

Mrs Tracy Page  
Headteacher  
Woodhouse Community Primary School  
Walker Drive  
Bishop Auckland  
County Durham  
DL14 6QW

Dear Mrs Page

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodhouse Community Primary School , Durham**

Following my visit to your school on 24 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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. I would also like to thank you for welcoming my colleague, Chris Smith HMI, who was shadowing the visit.

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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure recent improvements are sustained by making sure that the school improvement plan identifies more specific targets and milestones over a longer period of time so the school's progress on the journey to be 'good' can be measured and evaluated.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, subject and other leaders, a group of pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher of Wingate Infant School and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Blackhall, who is supporting the school, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and looked at a range of evidence including information on pupils' progress, samples of pupils' work, the outcomes of monitoring activities and the minutes of governing body meetings. You accompanied us on a tour of the

school, which included observing pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons, and my colleague also observed pupils' behaviour at playtime.

## **Context**

Since the inspection in October 2013, a new Chair of Governors, Vice-Chair of Governors, four parent governors and a local authority governor have been appointed. One teaching assistant has left the school and a new teaching assistant took up her post on 6 January 2014.

## **Main findings**

You, the new leadership team and governors have taken decisive action to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. The school improvement plan identifies immediate and appropriate priorities and targets until April 2014 and the impact of the work on these is beginning to be seen, for example, improvements in the rate of progress pupils are now making. However, the plan does not show how this progress will be sustained over a longer period of time, beyond April 2014. For example, there is a lack of long-term, specific measurable targets and milestones to enable leaders and managers to check the school's progress on the journey to 'good'. There is evidence, however, of the early positive impact of the school's work in tackling areas for improvement.

- Evidence seen in pupils' work shows they are now making better progress and the quality of marking and feedback is improving. It is clear pupils now have more opportunities to respond to marking and feedback. Pupils who spoke to me during the visit confirmed that marking is helping them to improve their work.
- The evidence in your monitoring file shows that comments on the quality of teaching are now more evaluative. Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and checks on teachers' planning are now conducted on a more regular basis. Appropriate targets for improvement are identified for individual teachers and are followed-up to check these are met. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching.
- The school's data show that pupils are beginning to make better progress. You and senior leaders are holding teachers and teaching assistants more fully to account for pupils' progress through half-termly pupil progress meetings.
- The provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is improving because support provided is now targeted more precisely to meet pupils' specific needs; the school's data show these pupils are also now making better progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is improving, as observed in lessons and around the school.
- Attendance is improving and is now moving closer to the national average.

The new Chair of Governors and other members of the governing body have made a very positive start and there is clear indication that governance is now improving. Governors now have a greater understanding of school achievement data and are better placed to challenge leaders about any underachievement. Evidence in the minutes of governing body meetings, shows governors are now holding leaders more to account for the improvements in the school and are finding out for themselves how well pupils are learning by making visits to classrooms and meeting with leaders. An external review of governance took place in November 2013 and governors now have a detailed action plan to show the steps they will take in order to hold leaders more to account.

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 Education Development Partner is providing well-targeted support to leaders by conducting joint lesson observations and scrutinies of pupils' work which is helping to identify where most improvement is needed. This is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and marking and feedback. A School Improvement Adviser is also providing appropriate support to help subject leaders develop their skills in checking and evaluating the work in their subjects. The local authority has brokered support from a national leader of education, the headteacher of Wingate Infant School and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Blackhall, to help improve the quality of teaching and staff are benefiting from the opportunities provided to observe good practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Durham local authority.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster

**Her Majesty's Inspector**