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4 March 2014

Ms Kate Wooder  
Executive Headteacher  
Tower Bridge Primary School  
Fair Street  
London  
SE1 2AE

Dear Ms Wooder

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tower Bridge Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 3 March 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:

- ensure that the improvement plan is sharply focused with regular and specific milestones against which the governing body can measure improvement.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the inclusion leader, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and three representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I spoke to a group of six pupils from Years 5 and 6. I evaluated the school improvement plan. Records of visits by local authority officers, achievement information and recent records of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning were scrutinised. I joined you to visit some classrooms where we looked at pupils' English and mathematics books.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have left the school. The school has entered into a soft federation for a fixed period, with Snowsfields Primary School, Southwark. Subsequently, you have been appointed as the executive headteacher across both schools. The deputy headteacher, inclusion manager and school business manager from Snowsfields are working across the two schools. Two teachers have left the school and both have been replaced with temporary appointments. A temporary teaching assistant has been appointed to help develop the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## **Main findings**

At the time of my visit, you had been the executive headteacher at the school for only six days; already the influence of your leadership can be felt. You plan to improve the quality of teaching and learning by using a coaching model, which will team up teachers from the two schools, so that they are able to learn from each other. You have already established a training plan to develop teachers' confidence and accuracy at assessing how well their pupils achieve.

You have inherited a post-inspection action plan that is no longer fit-for-purpose because it does not take into account the range of opportunities now made available through the partnership with Snowsfields. You are re-writing the plan to include the support that is available through the partnership arrangement. Importantly, the revised plan will be strengthened by the inclusion of milestones that governors can use to hold school leaders to account at frequent intervals.

The quality of learning in classrooms is still inconsistent. This was evident both from the school's progress data and from pupils' books. When we visited the majority of the classrooms, we saw that the quality of marking in pupils' books varied considerably. The work of many pupils was of a very poor quality and was not being checked closely enough by teachers. Some pupils were doing work that was too easy and that did not provide them with adequate challenge. The pupils that I spoke to said that all too frequently, the work was too easy. Mathematics and English books show that in too many classes, teachers do not expect enough of their pupils. In some of the classrooms that we visited, the role of teaching assistants was unclear. This stopped them from making a significant contribution to pupils learning.

You shared your plans to develop the Early Years Foundation Stage because you have already identified that there is still considerable work to be done here. The provision in both the Nursery and Reception classes requires considerable improvement. The activities and resources in the shared outside area were of a very poor quality and the provision in the classrooms did not do enough to excite and engage children. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader from Snowsfields will

work with teachers at Tower Bridge to increase the opportunities for children to engage with high quality activities that have been carefully planned to meet their needs.

The governing body has responded quickly to the outcome of the inspection. It is working in partnership with the local authority to move the school forward and has made a commitment to the partnership with Snowsfields. It has had an external review of its work and identified the areas in which it needs to improve. You sensibly plan to combine this information into the new improvement plan. The governors who met with me had a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are arranging training for all governors, to enable them to hold the school more effectively to account for the improvements.

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 has acted swiftly to broker the partnership between Tower Bridge Primary School and Snowsfields Primary School. In doing this, it has ensured that experienced and successful leadership is at the helm of the school. It has also provided some support for the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which you have appreciated. The linked school improvement adviser has provided good support to evaluate the quality of the teaching at the school. However, both you and the governors agree that the support provided by a leadership consultant has been of most use to the school during this period of change. This support has enabled you and your leadership team to focus solely on teaching and learning without the distraction of other issues, in the short amount of time that you have been leading the school. The local authority has also financially supported the partnership.

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

Yours sincerely

Adam Higgins  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**