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13 March 2014

Mr David Lloyd  
Executive Headteacher  
Westgate Primary School  
Summerhill Road  
Dartford  
DA1 2LP

Dear Mr Lloyd

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Westgate Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you as the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher (acting head of school), two governors including the recently appointed Chair of the Governing Body, subject leaders for English and mathematics, and a representative of the local authority. I visited all classes to see the school in action and evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan.

### **Context**

The substantive headteacher is currently absent from school. The local authority has appointed you, a headteacher from another local school, to work as executive headteacher for three days a week. The deputy headteacher is leading the school on the other days. New subject leaders for English and mathematics have been

appointed from within the existing staff to be part of the senior leadership team. The local authority have been exploring a move to academy status since the inspection in December. The school governors were independently exploring the options of academisation prior to the schools inspection. The Year 2 class teacher left in March and the class is being taught by a temporary teacher. The school is currently advertising for a special educational needs coordinator to work for three days a week. Two governors have stepped down and the local authority has appointed three experienced governors, including a new Chair of the Governing Body.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

You are providing the school with a clear sense of direction and purpose which staff appreciate, and they have rallied to start to put the necessary changes in place. You are acutely aware of the need to build capacity at Westgate and you are starting to build up the skills within the new senior leadership team. Although you know you need to implement new systems urgently, at the same time, you are sensibly developing teachers' ownership of new arrangements through consultation.

You have acted quickly to start to make improvements. Teachers are working well with you because they are keen to develop their practice. You have introduced a new procedure for setting targets for pupils' work, although this is at an early stage. Some teachers are unsure exactly what is expected of them and others are trying out their ideas so there is not yet a consistent method across the school. You understand the need to revisit this and share what is going well in order to develop a common approach. You are using staff from your substantive school effectively to coach and support teachers to develop these new methods. They offer useful practical support and teachers at Westgate find it helpful to work with colleagues in a similar year group to share ideas. The Westgate staff's evident commitment to the school, coupled with the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, provides a solid foundation on which to base these changes.

The new electronic system you put in place to track how well pupils are doing is helping teachers see exactly which pupils are falling behind. Previously, groups to help these pupils catch up were carried out separately to work in class. You expect teachers to oversee this now and, as a result, they are more answerable for how well all their pupils do. This increased accountability is also evident in the new way of linking teachers' performance to pay: you have made it clear to teachers the level of responsibility they should take at each stage of their career, and linked pay directly to their work in the classroom. This is a helpful document for governors to check how decisions relating to pay are made.

The subject leaders for English and mathematics are inexperienced but have received helpful coaching from a consultant appointed by the local authority as well as senior leaders from your own school. As a result, they are developing skills to check teachers' work to find out where there are strengths and weaknesses. They recently looked at pupils' books which provided a useful starting point to show where teachers need to improve. However, they need further support to write action plans which help them to know precisely what they are aiming for and the exact steps they need to take to achieve their goals.

Support for governance from the local authority was initially held back by the local authority's poor communication which slowed the appointment of new governors. Three additional governors are now in place, including a new Chair, to strengthen the governing body. The newly formed governing body only very recently held an initial meeting but already systems are being put in place to monitor the school's work and hold leaders to account. It is too early to see the impact of this work.

You are using the local authority statement of action as the basis for the school action plan. However, neither plan contains enough detail of exactly what steps will be taken to address each area for improvement to be a useful working document for senior leaders, staff and governors. Actions are not planned beyond summer 2014 so it is unclear how the school will make progress after this while it is anticipated still to require special measures. The plans do not focus teachers well enough on closing gaps in attainment because neither is explicit about the expected standards and progress of all groups of pupils. This also makes it difficult for governors to hold the school closely to account.

The local authority has provided helpful support for teaching and learning including brokering the executive headteacher from a local school. Support from a consultant to coach the recently appointed subject leaders has been useful to sharpen their skills. Local authority personnel have helped to audit safeguarding and special educational needs to check and strengthen these aspects of the school's work. The improvement adviser checks regularly on the work of the school, providing a useful source of advice and support for senior leaders.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard

**Her Majesty's Inspector**