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31 March 2014

Mrs Judy Milford  
Headteacher  
Knowle Primary School  
Ringmore Way  
West Park  
Plymouth  
Devon  
PL5 3QG

Dear Mrs Milford

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Knowle Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 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:

- strengthen its focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning to good or better by:
  - developing teachers' skills in checking the progress of all pupils during the lesson and adapting activities, the pace and questions to promote rapid progress for all, including the most able pupils
  - enabling staff to identify and observe the characteristics of outstanding practice in other schools in a similar context, especially in providing activities and questions that motivate and inspire pupils to think and learn
  
- provide governors with an accurate overview of the attainment and progress of pupils compared to all schools nationally.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your deputy, pupils, members of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. Other documents, including those containing information on pupils' progress, were examined. In addition, we jointly observed five lessons and looked at pupils' books.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, the literacy subject leader has been taken out of class to provide intervention and support for reading and writing. A new school building is due to replace the current 1950s building during the next year.

## **Main findings**

Senior leaders are improving the use they make of the system for monitoring pupils' progress. The information is now used to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils each term. Any underachieving pupils are identified promptly and appropriate intervention and support is provided. This is helping to close the gaps for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and for pupils supported by the pupil premium.

Teachers are making better use of assessment to plan work at different levels of ability for their pupils. However, not all teachers are checking pupils' progress during the lesson and adapting the activities, pace and their questions to make sure all pupils, especially the most able, make rapid progress. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and some, though not all, give precise next steps that result in pupils improving their work. Pupils now also assess their own and each other's work and this helps them to know what to do to improve it.

Pupils are beginning to make better progress, due to the improvements in matching lessons more closely to the range of their learning needs. Progress in reading is improving because pupils are reading more widely and regularly. They are enjoying the range of books and online quizzes that have been introduced recently. Progress is also improving in mathematics, especially when pupils are challenged to apply their calculation skills in solving 'real life' problems. Pupils make less progress in writing because they spend too long learning a new skill, for example of changing tense, and not enough time applying it in writing that gives them a real sense of purpose and audience. The school has identified the need to review the curriculum so that it motivates the pupils to learn, especially boys, and helps them to see the relevance of their learning.

Pupils' behaviour continues to be good and the school's work to keep them safe and secure is effective. The school continues to work effectively to improve attendance.

The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and what needs to be done to improve it. Through coaching the staff, the deputy headteacher is helping them to improve their practice. However, while it covers all aspects of the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 inspection, the action plan does not outline what the school will do to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that staff and governors can achieve the vision. The senior leaders have reviewed their self-evaluation, but it is still too complicated to give governors an accurate overview of the attainment and progress of pupils compared to all schools nationally.

An external review of governance found that the governing body is over-reliant on information from the headteacher. Governors now visit the school regularly and monitor actions such as improvements in teachers' marking. However, until they gain a clear view of why the school's performance is currently below the government's floor standards, the governors can only offer limited challenge to senior leaders to raise standards for all pupils.

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 school is drawing upon the support provided by the local authority and teaching school alliance well. The support includes funding for reciprocal visits to and from a Local Leader of Education which have resulted in improvements in teachers' marking. It will also include visits to outstanding schools in a similar context in the near future. The local authority appropriately monitors the effectiveness of the support each term. It is providing ongoing training for the Governing Body, which needs to help the governors in gaining an objective view of the school so that they can hold the school to account for its standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**