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26 March 2014

Susan Penglase  
Headteacher  
Watling Lower School  
Bull Pond Lane  
Dunstable  
LU6 3BJ

Dear Mrs Penglase

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Watling Lower School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 26 September 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:

- tackle the under-achievement in Year 3
- provide more support to develop the role of teaching assistants across the school.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school action plans, and the school's monitoring and assessment documentation. You accompanied me during visits to all classes in the school, where we observed teaching and looked at pupils' work.

### **Context**

Since the inspection one teacher and one teaching assistant have left the school. The school is recruiting for replacements.

## **Main findings**

Your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. You know what needs to be done to improve teaching and raise standards across the school. The pace of change has been limited by staffing changes in the recent past. These changes are nearly resolved and no longer present barriers to progress.

Teaching is improving across the school. Your assessment data shows that pupils are making good progress in reading and mathematics in almost all year groups. Progress in writing was weaker in the autumn term but pupils' work shows that it is now catching up. Pupils in Year 4 are on track to be above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics when they leave the school. Achievement in Year 3 lags behind the rest of the school. Pupils in this year group are currently one term behind the targets that you have set for them. There is also some under-achievement amongst pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. Your interventions to support these pupils are having impact in some cases, but in others there is not enough progress.

You are improving marking, and most pupils now receive helpful feedback about their work. In some cases, the quality of this feedback is very high. Pupils are enjoying responding to their teacher's comments, showing the teacher that they understand how to improve. The quality of teachers' assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage is variable. In one class, detailed observations track individual pupils as they progress and are used well to plan the next steps. In contrast assessments in the other class are much briefer and less frequent.

Your improvement plans are clear and focus on the right areas. You are making effective use of external support to improve teaching. You are creating opportunities for school leaders to evaluate the quality of teaching. This includes looking at teachers' plans, the work that the pupils produce and observing lessons. At present these activities are combining to provide you with an overall picture of how effective teachers are in all aspects of their work. Not enough support is available to develop the role of teaching assistants so that they can have more impact on learning. Governors are clear about the school's priorities for improvement and have an increasingly accurate understanding of the quality of teaching across the school.

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 is providing an appropriate level of support in response to the recent inspection. It has commissioned a Local Leader of Education to support you in

the improvement of teaching and leadership. Additionally, the local authority is providing an advisor who is making regular visits to the school. Two teachers have been attending an improving teaching course.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Moodie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**