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6 May 2014

Mrs Vanessa Bingham  
Interim Headteacher  
Potters Gate CofE Primary School  
Potters Gate  
Farnham  
GU9 7BB

Dear Mrs Bingham

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Potters Gate CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 2 May 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 January 2014. 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:

- sustain and build the leadership capacity to ensure the pace of change does not slow
- evaluate the effectiveness of the use of pupil premium to inform plans for the use of the funding in the future.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and your senior leaders, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We walked around school together to see classes at work. I evaluated the action plan and looked at other key documents.

## **Context**

You joined the school just before the inspection to provide leadership capacity while the headteacher is on maternity leave. There have been a few staff changes since the inspection. You are in the process of appointing staff for September as the school continues to grow in size.

## **Main findings**

There is sense of urgency from you, your senior leaders and governors to provide the best education for pupils at the school. The school's weaknesses had been identified prior to the inspection so you fully accept the improvements that are needed. The action plan is appropriately focused on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. It takes account of all the points for improvement identified in these areas during the inspection and sets out clearly what actions will be taken through to December 2014. A separate planner mapping what will happen each week helps you and your senior leaders manage the improvement work and keep on track. Usefully the action plan separates who is responsible within school and the local authority for checking on progress and evaluating impact. We discussed the need to avoid ambiguity by being explicit what the school's expectations are of the progress pupils will make each year and over time. Some targets need quantifying so that it is clear what the school is aiming for, for example more pupils more reaching higher levels, rather than simply being ambitious for things to get better.

There has been concerted action to improve the quality of teaching. Much is based on senior leaders working directly with teachers to support them in planning and teaching their lessons. They follow this up with a programme of ongoing visits to classrooms which build up a picture of teaching over time and check that points for improvement have been acted upon. I suggested these observations would benefit from a sharper focus on what the pupils have actually learnt. You have revisited expectations for marking and feedback with staff. There is evidence that this is improving the opportunities pupils have to respond to marking, although as you know there is more to be done to ensure that this is consistent across the school. Senior leaders are confident that there are already signs that teaching is improving, based on observations in classes and the number of pupils on track to meet their targets. They also provided case studies to show the impact of improved teaching on the progress of individual pupils. These are pleasing signs but as we discussed the proof of better teaching will be the actual progress pupils at all levels make over time. Walking around school and talking briefly with a handful of pupils I could see signs that work to motivate pupils and improve their understanding of what they are learning are starting to have an impact.

You recognise the time senior leaders devote to improving teaching and the need to share the load. To this end, you are in the process of appointing two new middle leaders. The development of middle managers is not covered in any detail in the

action plan as it stands. There needs to be a clear process for their induction and development. I was pleased to hear that you doing your best to only appoint strong teachers by making sure you test the quality of their teaching through your appointment processes.

Governors are getting accurate information now. Minutes of meetings show a suitable level of challenge. The external review of the school's use of the pupil premium had already happened in the form of an audit by the local authority just before the inspection. It was also a focus of the recent local authority review. Both identified the need to evaluate the effectiveness of current provision. Senior leaders track what works for individual pupils. Governors have very recently asked for that information to be analysed to show the effectiveness and impact of the different interventions.

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 placed the school in their focused school support category from autumn 2013. The autumn term was used to review the school's position and a Leadership Partner was allocated to work with the school from January. They brokered your appointment as interim headteacher at the request of governors. The school feels that support has not always been as quick as it might have been. For example, the support for mathematics and the leadership review did not come about until the spring, after the inspection. A range of valued support, focused on the right issues, has been provided since the inspection, including signposting the school to links with schools with strong teaching or good use of pupil premium. You know how many days support the school is entitled to but are not clear what will be provided and when. You would find this useful to help you finalise the resource section of your action plan. The local authority will start holding half termly review meetings soon to monitor the school's progress. They are looking at options to sustain the leadership capacity beyond the end of this term.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Surrey and as below.

Yours sincerely

Alison Storey

**Her Majesty's Inspector**