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23 May 2014

Kevin Imbush  
Headteacher  
Somers Heath Primary School  
Foyle Drive  
South Ockendon  
RM15 5LX

Dear Mr Imbush

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Somers Heath Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 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 February 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:

- make all teaching good so that rate of pupils' progress accelerates and variations in progress between different groups of pupils are eliminated
- ensure that the small amount of weaker marking becomes as good as the very best
- ensure that governance strengthens by taking immediate and appropriate action on receipt of the external review of governance.

## Evidence



During the visit, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two members of the Progress Board, a representative of the local authority and pupils from Key Stage 2, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. We visited every class briefly to speak to pupils and to look at their books.

## Context

Since the previous inspection you have put plans in place to change the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Key Stage 1 leader will have oversight of the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 from the start of June 2014. You have extended the morning session by fifteen minutes before the start of break to give more time to the teaching of subjects including art, history and music.

## Main findings

Your action plan sets out the school's key priorities and has an ambitious timescale within which you aim to improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress. As this plan has only been in place for three months, it is too early at this stage to measure the full impact of actions you have taken.

You are working well with teachers to raise their awareness about the importance of accelerating individual pupil's progress and how this is linked to raising levels of attainment. While your current data indicate that higher-attaining pupils are progressing better in mathematics, you and the governing body are aware that challenges remain in securing more rapid progress in reading and writing in order to address the variation which remains across some year groups.

You are forming a more accurate profile of the impact of teaching in the school through observations of teaching; scrutiny of pupils' work; a review of the learning environment; teachers' marking and pupils' outcomes. You have responded positively to comments from pupils that some teachers were using too many worksheets during their lessons, and have worked with these teachers to ensure that supplementary teaching materials are used more appropriately. During my tour of the school, I saw many pupils engaged in their learning and saw some effective marking in books which gave clear guidance on how to improve, and to which pupils had responded. However, the quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent and teaching across the school is not yet consistently good.

You are using the existing strengths in the senior leadership team to better effect in order to tackle some of the school's weaker areas. For example, you have drawn on the expertise of your Key Stage 1 leader to oversee the Early Years Foundation Stage as well as Key Stage 1. You have identified another member of staff to research the most appropriate curriculum model for the school. This colleague

considered a variety of models before presenting her preferred model to school leaders.



Governors continue to visit the school with a specific focus and have received training on what to look for when analysing data on progress and attainment. It is important that they develop their skills in asking pertinent questions which give them the essential information they require to pose an appropriate level of challenge. The external review of governance has yet to take place. When the review is published, it is recommended that governors act immediately on its findings and produce an action plan to address weaknesses identified.

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 provided an appropriate balance of support and challenge to the school. It challenges you and members of the governing body through the Progress Board, which includes members with proven expertise in school improvement . This Board has met twice to date. Members of the Progress Board attended the most recent meeting of the governing body, and have a crucial role to play in developing governance. Consultants from the local authority have worked well with key leaders to support them in writing action plans to drive improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**