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12 September 2014

Graham Lockwood  
Headteacher  
Elm Road Primary School  
Elm Road  
Wisbech  
PE13 2TB

Dear Mr Lockwood

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Elm Road Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 11 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 March 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 more use of the best teaching to raise achievement across all year groups
- raise leaders' awareness of what learning is typically like in all classrooms

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the associate leader (a recently appointed, part-time senior leader) and three members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I considered written communication from a representative of the local authority. I also evaluated the school action plan and the school's assessment documentation. You and the associate leader accompanied me during visits to all classes in the school where we observed teaching and looked at pupils' work.

## **Context**

Two teachers and one teaching assistant joined the school in September 2014 on a permanent basis. Two teachers are currently on maternity leave. The school is employing an associate leader with significant experience of school leadership to support school improvement for two days each week.

## **Main findings**

You have identified the right areas in need of improvement and are acting to tackle them. Your plans are clear and actions already taken to improve teaching have successfully halted the decline in achievement. Importantly, there are clear signs that pupils' learning is improving. Pupils in Year 6 left the school in July with standards in reading and writing that were in line with the national average. Standards in mathematics were above the national average. This is a significant improvement on the previous years' outcomes. Your current assessment information indicates that standards in reading and mathematics are in line with age related expectations in all year groups other than Year 4, where they are above average. Standards in writing are also broadly average in all year groups other than in Year 6, where standards are lower than they should be. You have introduced a more systematic way of teaching writing and are monitoring outcomes more regularly than in the past.

Pupils value your work to improve the quality of guidance and feedback that they receive from teachers. The revised system is clear and easy to understand and pupils are generally keen to respond to teachers' comments.

Teaching is improving but there is more to be done. Some teachers are making very good use of assessment during lessons to gauge understanding and support pupils who are struggling, or extend the learning of the more-able. This is not consistent across classes. Other teachers are not checking on pupils' learning often enough during lessons. This means that pupils' progress in these classes is too variable. The school is making insufficient use of its best teachers to improve teaching and promote better learning in other classes.

Leaders at all levels currently rely too heavily on formal observations of lessons to inform their evaluation of the quality of teaching in lessons. This does not provide them with a clear enough picture of what learning is typically like and opportunities to work alongside teachers, coaching and developing their practice, are missed.

The governing body commissioned an external review very quickly after the last inspection and have already implemented the majority of its recommendations. As a result, the governing body receive more regular and detailed information from

school leaders about the school's core work. A more rigorous programme of governor monitoring is now in place.

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 and is contributing to the progress that the school is making. Since the inspection advisers for literacy and mathematics have supported the school's work to improve writing and develop the use of a structured maths scheme.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Moodie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**