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Mrs Ani Magill and Mr Seb Sales  
Associate Headteachers  
Knaphill School  
High Street  
Woking  
GU21 2QH

Dear Mrs Magill and Mr Sales

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Knaphill School**

Following my visit to your school on 23 September 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 second 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, with the support of the local authority, should take further action to:

- strengthen governance
- decide on long term plans for the school's leadership

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, the Chair of Governors and representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection and your plans for improvement. We walked around school together to see classes at work and I talked informally with members of staff.

## **Context**

There have been significant staffing changes since my last visit. The headteacher and deputy headteacher left last term. You have agreed to act as associate headteachers for this school year and a new deputy headteacher has been appointed internally. All four year group leaders are new to their posts and there were eight changes of classteacher at the beginning of this term. Two governors have resigned as they feel they cannot give the time needed to the school.

## **Main findings**

It was evident from formal discussions and from staff I talked to around school that everyone now fully accepts that the school has to improve, and rapidly. No-one is under any illusion about what has to be achieved this school year and there is a positive approach to tackling it. You and your deputy are absolutely clear that the top priority is making sure that teaching is consistently good or better. You have wasted no time in setting out your expectations of staff and pupils and getting into classrooms on a daily basis to check how good teaching is. As a result, you already have a good picture of where teaching is stronger and where it needs to improve. Support and challenge for staff are focused and in some cases there are already signs of a positive impact. The high profile of senior leaders around school is having a positive impact on behaviour.

Standards at the end of Year 6 rose in 2014. Your analysis of data shows that this is not down to better progress, but because pupils' starting points were higher. Too much has relied in the past on pupils making rapid progress in their last year at school. We discussed how important it is that pupils make better progress across the school, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Work has begun with your partner infant school to ensure that both schools agree pupils' achievement as they transfer so that work is set at the right level from the start. It is early days, but Year 3 staff now have a range of evidence to help them check what pupils already understand and can do.

Given all the changes since the last visit, the school development plan is out of date. You know what the priorities are and what needs to happen but, appropriately, have concentrated so far on taking prompt action rather than formalising plans. Given how much there is to do, it is crucial to draw up a new plan as soon as possible. This should ensure everyone is clear exactly what the school is aiming for, what has to be done and when, and that progress is checked along the way to avoid slippage.

Obviously, you have to start again developing the role of year group leaders. From discussions with staff, it is apparent that the systems and structures you have put in place ensure they feel well supported by the deputy headteacher. In turn, their teams feel well supported by them. You have the next stage in their development planned out. They will develop their skills to accurately evaluate teaching and

learning by working alongside you and your deputy to observe lessons, look at pupils' work and analyse data. They have places on a middle leader training programme run by one of your schools which, among other things, will focus on how to challenge staff to improve. I suggested it would be helpful to offer this opportunity to the special educational needs co-ordinator as well.

Governors have a key role to play this year, not only in holding senior leaders to account to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement but in making decisions about long term plans for the school's leadership. An external review of governance last term highlighted a lack of capacity in the governing body. While things have moved on, they largely lack the experience needed for the challenges ahead. I recommended that, with the Chair of Governors and local authority you look carefully at alternative models to strengthen governance for the coming year.

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**

You are making good use of the expertise in your two schools to provide support for Knaphill this year. Already, staff from the secondary school are working with leaders to improve teaching and mathematics, and providing specific support for newly qualified teachers. Plans are in place for staff from the primary school to get more involved as the term goes on, including opportunities for staff from Knaphill to observe good teaching.

The local authority has arranged and funded the support from you. As such, it is mainly standing back from providing direct support this year. Instead it will focus on challenging the school through half-termly review meetings. The level of challenge must be greater than it has been in the recent past.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Bradley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**