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20 October 2014

Mr Mike Wilson  
The Executive Headteacher  
Westlands Primary School  
Homewood Avenue  
Sittingbourne  
Kent  
ME10 1XN

Dear Mr Wilson

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Westlands Primary School**

Following my visit to your academy on 17 October I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring visit since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in December 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Corporate Director of Education Learning and Skills for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2013**

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching to raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
  - all teachers have consistently high expectations for the quality of pupils' work and for their behaviour, especially during lessons
  - teachers use information about pupils' progress to plan work which is matched to the needs and abilities of all groups of pupils, including the most able
  - lessons are delivered at a brisk pace so that pupils stay motivated and are able to complete more work
  - pupils are given more opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems in mathematics lessons and in different subjects
  - pupils are taught how to edit and improve their written work
  - pupils are given more opportunities to explain their ideas and learning orally in lessons to develop their speaking and listening skills
  - teachers' high expectations of pupils' written work in English are as high in all other subjects, including the quality of marking of work in other subjects
  - there are more opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from existing good practice in the school.
- Build on recent improvements in attendance so that pupils' attendance is at least in line with the national average.
- Strengthen the role played by leaders at all levels to bring about further improvements by:
  - involving governors in checking the school's effectiveness and in identifying priorities for further improvement
  - fully embedding recent improvements in the role played by middle leaders in checking and developing the quality of teaching in their subjects and areas
  - improving communication with parents and increasing opportunities for parents to be more involved in their children's learning.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 17 October 2014**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the executive headteacher, the interim headteacher, middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, members of the executive board and representatives of the Swale Academies Trust. The inspector visited lessons to observe teaching and learning. The purpose of the inspection was to look at how well leadership and management are building sustainable improvements in teaching and attendance.

### **Context**

The headteacher is on extended leave. The deputy headteacher is now the interim headteacher. A second deputy headteacher will join the academy in January.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Leaders and managers have sustained the improvements reported at the last monitoring visit. These have led to a rapid rise in pupils' achievement and better levels of attendance. In 2014 the proportion of pupils that made expected and more than expected progress in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 was above that seen nationally in the previous year. Progress in reading also improved, but not as strongly. Attainment at Key Stage 1 was in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils at the expected standard for phonics by the end of Year 1 rose dramatically. Academy information shows that pupils in other year groups are now, on average, making at least expected progress. However, reports to governors do not show the proportions of pupils that are on track to make expected or better progress by end of a key stage. This can mask underachievement and lead to inaccurate analysis. Attendance has improved and is broadly in line with the national average. The number of pupils with high levels of absence has decreased notably.

Leaders have identified suitable priorities for further development. A recently produced, detailed school action plan defines how these will be brought about. However, the plan needs sharpening. It does not contain a clear analysis of the starting point for each priority area of work. So it is not clear how much an area needs to improve to reach a particular goal, and it does not contain overall targets for pupils' achievement. Leaders are working to put this right.

Senior and middle leaders continue to check the quality of teaching and hold teachers tightly to account for pupils' progress. This has been key to raising achievement across the academy. However, leaders are not considering sufficiently the impact of teaching on pupils' learning when they observe teaching and look at pupils' books. As a result, leaders have not identified some aspects of teaching that need further development.

The governing body's executive board is focusing closely on improving the academy. It has used information from recent reviews of the academy to challenge leaders and hold them effectively to account. The executive board has responded well to the findings of the external review of governance. It has produced and is carrying out a well-considered action plan. An induction booklet helps governors understand their role. Governors are auditing their skills and organising training to develop these where needed.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Teachers now typically have higher expectations for the quality of pupils' work and behaviour. They plan and teach lessons that engage pupils' interest. Pupils work hard and behave well.
- Pupils' regularly work independently to review their writing and identify features of good writing they have included or missed out. Many pupils show skill in this.
- Teachers ask pupils useful questions to help them develop their understanding and their speaking and listening skills.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Teachers often work with one group of pupils in the class for a long time to make sure they are learning well. As a result, teachers do not always notice, quickly enough, when other pupils are stuck or need more challenging work.
- Teachers' written comments on pupils' work and pupils' self-assessment are not always helpful, giving pupils too many areas of improvement to consider at once. Pupils do not know which area needs the most attention and they become confused or unfocused.
- Lessons do not always build well on pupils' past learning and a few teachers set the same work for all pupils, rather than match it to their varied ability.

### **External support**

The Swale Academies Trust monitors the progress of the academy closely. Trust leaders and external consultants carry out thorough termly quality assurance visits. The academy trust's executive headteacher and advisory headteacher provide six days of support a week between them. Support to develop teaching continues to be provided when needed. For example, an English consultant has recently been working with the academy to support developments in that subject.