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23 October 2014

Mr Martin Hall  
Headteacher  
Woodlands Education Centre  
Park House  
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Hampshire  
PO9 4AJ

Dear Mr Hall

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodlands Education Centre**

Following my visit to your school on 23 October 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 July 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and management board members are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Leaders should take further action to:

- properly address teaching that requires improvement, by ensuring that the staff training programme is tailored to individual staff members' needs
- develop teachers' skills to improve students' literacy
- sharpen the improvement plans so that they can be used to call leaders and other staff to account.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, members of the management board, including the Chair, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your school improvement plan and a range of other monitoring documentation, including notes of local authority monitoring visits.

## **Main findings**

The outcomes of the section 5 inspection which took place in July 2014 were not a surprise to you. Shortly after your appointment in Easter 2014, you correctly identified the key areas for improvement and communicated these to board members and staff. Your priorities were affirmed during the inspection.

Over a very short period of time you have taken prompt and effective action to establish a framework in which leaders, management board members and teachers can work effectively to bring about the necessary rapid improvements. In particular you have wisely re-structured the leadership and management arrangements, including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher, and ensured that there are now clear and effective lines of accountability for all staff, particularly those with leadership roles.

You have put together a comprehensive plan to address the key priorities for improvement from the last inspection, which now underpin all leadership activity. Although the plan identifies appropriate actions within sensible timescales, it requires minor amendment to become a useful tool for management board members. In its current format it is unclear who is responsible for monitoring or measuring the success of the identified actions. Furthermore, some of the success indicators do not clarify how students will benefit, or the extent to which their achievement, attendance or behaviour will improve.

Systems to promote more regular attendance and better behaviour have been appropriately strengthened. Teachers track students' behaviour and now record any incidents or concerns on the central data base. This means that leaders can quickly identify students in need of extra support and take the necessary action to ensure that they engage successfully with their learning and make better progress.

Similarly, students' progress data is now recorded and analysed half-termly. This process has also been wisely aligned to the introduction of student progress meetings, ensuring that individuals' achievement and behaviour are looked at together. Consequently, leaders, teachers and students themselves now have a complete overview of how well they are progressing. Early signs indicate that compared with the same period last year, students are making better progress in the core subjects of mathematics and English. Furthermore, attendance has improved by two percentage points and exclusions have very significantly reduced.

Members of the management board have wasted no time in responding to the recommendations of the section 5 inspection. The Chair of the Board has taken rapid action to bring the budget under control. He has considerable experience of governance in challenging circumstances and has been fully involved in the review of the leadership and staffing structures.

Board members are now half-way through the process of reviewing their practice, with the support of the local authority governors' services. The first stage of the review, involving an audit of their skills took place straight away and board members are now set to undertake the second stage. In the meantime, the Chair of the Board has already assigned key responsibilities to each board member and initiated a programme of regular visits. These focus on the learning environment, the quality of teaching and evaluating how leaders are moving this aspect of the improvement plan forward. Although it is too soon to judge the impact of this activity, leaders know where teaching needs to improve most. You have also wisely ensured that systems to support teachers to improve their practice are being correctly implemented.

In order to improve students' achievement across subjects, you have appropriately prioritised the development of students' literacy skills. To this end, afternoon registration has been extended to incorporate reading time and key words are now displayed in classrooms across the centre. Although this work is in its infancy, and despite clear evidence of these displays, not all of the written work seen during my visit, was of sufficient quality or depth.

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**

Local authority officers have provided appropriate support, including carrying out the management board review and providing subject specialist consultancy to develop the leadership of mathematics and English. In particular, the link adviser, recognising your needs as a headteacher new in post, has been instrumental in the review of the leadership and staffing structures. These strategies have helped you and board members to put in place staffing structures and management systems that are fit for the purpose of rapidly improving teaching and students' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Farmer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**