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14 November 2014

Mr P Chantler  
The Headteacher  
The Churchill School  
Haven Drive  
Hawkinge  
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CT18 7RH

Dear Mr Chantler

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of The Churchill School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 November 2014 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. 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 inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in November 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 Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve the proportion of consistently good and better teaching to accelerate rates of progress for all groups across the school by:
  - reducing the occasional low-level disruption by ensuring all teaching engages pupils and captures their interest
  - ensuring that planning takes more account of the abilities of higher-attaining pupils so that they are appropriately stretched during whole-class introductions
  - checking the understanding of different groups of pupils through more precisely targeted questions
  - reducing the variability in phonics teaching (the linking of sounds and letters) so that younger pupils are more confident to tackle unfamiliar words when reading.
- Improve rates of progress across the school by ensuring that all teachers use the school's new assessment information to identify precisely what pupils already know and can do and use that information to plan and deliver lessons that consistently meet the needs of different groups.
- Improve the quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage to accelerate rates of progress by:
  - ensuring teachers have a clearer understanding of children's skills and abilities when the children start school by putting more robust on-entry assessment systems in place
  - providing more opportunities for children to be actively engaged in meaningful activities which will extend their learning
  - reducing the amount of time children are unengaged and not learning.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that all teachers consistently plan work which meets the needs of individuals and groups.
- Undertake an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 13 November 2014**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, a group of pupils, three governors, subject leaders for English and mathematics and the Early Years leader. The inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority. The inspector visited five classes with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. The inspector reviewed a range of documentation including the school's view of its own performance, the school development plan, pupil progress data, the school's checks on the suitability of adults working with children and information about exclusions and attendance. The inspector concentrated on evaluating how well leaders at all levels are raising standards.

### **Context**

Since the first monitoring inspection in April 2014, five new teachers have been appointed to replace teachers who left the school. An additional teacher (pupil premium champion) has been appointed in Key Stage 2 to support disadvantaged pupils.

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

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are taking effective action to raise standards. As a result of their determined work to improve the quality of teaching, pupils in Year 6 in July 2014 made good progress to reach standards above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. They are aware more needs to be done to ensure all pupils do as well as they should. They have identified the right areas to work on to make the necessary improvements and the school's action plan sets out exactly how they will achieve their goals.

Middle level leaders are starting to develop their roles to support senior leaders and help to raise standards. They have set up helpful arrangements to improve teaching. For example, class charts show which areas pupils need to work on in mathematics to help teachers to plan their work. However, these leaders have not checked to see just how well such systems are working and if they are effective enough to help all pupils to make good progress.

The early years leader has also set up useful systems to make sure children enjoy school and learn well. Teachers rightly use home visits and meetings with pre-school staff to identify exactly what children know, understand and can do before they start school. In addition, teachers carefully check basic skills such as letters and sounds right at the start of the year. They use all this information well to plan a wide range

of activities which interest the children and provide just the right level of challenge. It is too early to see the impact of these changes on raising standards.

Attendance rates are very high. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. One pupil commented, 'I wish I could be here for ten years!' Leaders expect pupils to attend regularly and absences are rigorously followed up. As a result, the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school has decreased. The proportion of pupils excluded from school was previously three times the national average. The effective support put in place for vulnerable pupils means that exclusions are now rare.

A review of governance was carried out in March 2014. It recommended that governors should challenge school leaders more robustly. Governors therefore sensibly implemented a programme of governor visits. These are not fully effective because governors do not ask the right questions to check exactly how well the school is doing. Governors say that they ask senior leaders many questions when they meet, but governor visit notes and minutes of meetings do not reflect this or indicate clearly enough whether or how well any queries have been addressed.

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

- Most pupils try hard and focus well on their work which helps them to make progress.
- Pupils know exactly what they are working on and teachers' marking shows them the next steps to improve.
- The recently-appointed pupil premium champion provides useful support for pupils whose circumstances put them at risk, encouraging them to do their best.

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

- Pupils say work is often too easy. In some lessons they have to complete undemanding work before moving on to more challenging tasks. This means they do not all achieve as well as they could.
- Teachers do not all target questions effectively enough to check the understanding of different groups of pupils.

### **External support**

The local authority provides useful support for leaders and governors. For instance, recent governing body training helped governors understand how to challenge school leaders more effectively. Teachers' work with colleagues in the 'Hub' of local schools is useful, for example to agree the standards pupils achieve in their work.