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2 December 2014

Mrs Karen Joyce  
Headteacher  
Somerlea Park Junior School  
Bank Street  
Somercotes  
Alfreton  
DE55 4JE

Dear Mrs Joyce

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Somerlea Park Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 1 December 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last monitoring inspection. I evaluated your plans for improvement. I reviewed your most recent data relating to pupils' achievement. I visited each class and considered the quality of pupils' learning in a range of subjects. I looked at the information which the school provides for parents and carers, including that held on its website. I looked at the school's documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

## **Context**

Since the second monitoring inspection in July 2014 the governing body has made a number of appointments. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed to replace the teaching responsibility previously held by a newly qualified teacher. A teacher has returned from a one year's sabbatical to teach pupils in Years 4 and 5 and resume her leadership role as special educational needs coordinator. A new teacher has been appointed to cover teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time, for three days per week as the previous postholder, a newly-qualified teacher, secured a promotion at another school. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in October 2014.

## **Main findings**

The school's systems to evaluate the impact of its improvement work are not good enough to enable the governing body to hold the school to account properly. Senior leaders are unable to demonstrate that recent actions are reversing the trend of pupils' weak achievement in reading. The school's plans for improvement do not focus sharply enough on tackling all of the key issues. There is not enough reference to the actions required to narrow the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates. Governors are not able to check whether such gaps are being narrowed. This is because they do not receive frequent enough information on the achievement of this group of pupils and the school improvement plan does not detail milestones relating to pupils' achievement so they can check the rate of improvement. Consequently, the school is not well placed to demonstrate that it is improving quickly enough.

You have organised a range of professional development activities targeted at improving the quality of teaching of reading. Staff have begun to implement initiatives to: develop pupils' skills in inference and deduction; develop the range of pupils' understanding of vocabulary; and motivate pupils to ask more questions about the texts they are reading. Although your checks show that teachers' skills are beginning to improve, pupils have not been assessed frequently enough to see if this is having a positive impact on their progress. Pupils say that the quality and range of books, particularly non-fiction that they have to choose from are not good enough.

Teachers' skills in the teaching of writing and mathematics continue to improve. Pupils are clearer about what teachers expect of them in these subjects. Teachers are using questioning more effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and check on their understanding. Teachers are following the marking policy and pupils are being given detailed feedback on how to improve their work in writing and mathematics. As a result, of these actions, pupils' workbooks show that pupils are learning more quickly in these subjects.

The recently appointed Chair of the Governing Body has instigated a comprehensive review of the school's work. This has been informed by the views of staff, pupils, the

Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, as well as the Chair of the teaching and learning committee. As a result, a three year strategic plan has been drawn up for further consultation with parents and other members of the governing body. Actions already identified to commence in the spring term 2015 include: the rebranding of the school's badging and uniform; acquisition of new computer equipment; harnessing the support of local and international businesses to strengthen the curriculum; and strategies for engaging parents more in their child's education. These actions are designed to help raise the profile of the school in the local area as well as raise expectations of what pupils from the school can achieve. Governors are also undertaking more frequent visits to school to check on whether agreed actions, outlined in the school's improvement plan, have been implemented. Nevertheless, the lack of clear measurable evidence of improving attainment and progress is hindering the governing body's ability to hold the school to account effectively.

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 advisor has been instrumental in collating a detailed plan of action and comprehensive package of support targeted at addressing weaknesses in the quality of teaching of reading. Teachers have been supported to develop their skills in making more accurate assessments of the standards of pupils' work, especially in reading. Teachers have responded positively to professional development and are beginning to implement suggested strategies to improve their practice.

Newly appointed teachers and those returning from leave have benefited from observing teaching at Duckmanton Primary School.

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

Yours sincerely

David Carter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**