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10 December 2014

Ms Helen Shead  
Headteacher  
Lancot School  
Lancot Drive  
Dunstable  
LU6 2AP

Dear Ms Shead

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Lancot School**

Following my visit to your school on 9 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, with leaders responsible for the key improvement priorities, with the Chair of the Governing Body and of the standards committee, and with the lead adviser from the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. I also scrutinised your monitoring and evaluation records, and senior leaders' planning and evaluation files and the records of their monitoring. We visited all classes together, looked at pupils' books and spoke to them about their learning.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, a member of the senior leadership team has remained on ill-health leave and a teacher has started maternity leave. A member of the teaching staff will leave at the end of the term.

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

You have responded positively to the recommendations in the previous inspection report by sharpening leadership practice and engaging other senior leaders effectively in the drive for improvement. Your improvement planning includes appropriate actions, and identified timescales show that you expect improvement to happen rapidly. The interim monitoring dates and identification of expected impact are, however, not specific enough to ensure that both you and the governing body can monitor the progress being made towards achieving your objectives each term. The plan has been drawn up in close consultation with the lead adviser from the local authority so support allocated is well targeted at meeting your key priorities. While they are similar, the inclusion of two different sets of criteria – one agreed by the school and another by the local authority – is a barrier to sharp, collaborative review at the governing body monitoring board meetings.

You have distributed responsibilities for leading aspects of improvement effectively and sought some extra external support to advise on improvement; for example, in mathematics and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each priority identified at the last inspection is separately led by the deputy headteacher or another leader. Their plans for improvement are well targeted and there are detailed records of the training and development that staff have received, and of the monitoring being undertaken to ensure improvement is consistent across the school. The deputy headteacher's leadership of the improvement of teaching and learning is particularly strong. This is because training given to teachers is followed up carefully in school and teachers are held to account by you both against the priorities identified for the improvement of their work and the difference you expect them to make to pupils' achievement.

Displays around school and teachers' demonstration of writing in lessons make the raised expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation explicit. As a result, their work is starting to reflect better standards. In mathematics, an audit of the skills and knowledge of staff is supporting the subject leader to target training and support effectively. A new calculation policy is written and ready to be implemented; this better supports teachers to show pupils how they are expected to use their skills.

The way assessment is used in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been changed. Each child now has their own 'learning journey' folder which is used to record how well they are making progress from their starting points. Staff are being trained to use observations of the children at work and play to assess their learning in more detail. Initial support from a local authority adviser has been helpful in identifying key elements of practice that need to improve.

You have established an overview of the quality and type of extra support given to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs while also implementing the necessary procedures to meet the new statutory requirements.

Governors have continued to provide support for leaders and are seeking further ways to ensure they have first-hand evidence of the results of the work undertaken to address the improvement priorities. They have responded with commitment to a review of governance undertaken by a consultant working for the local authority, despite feeling it to be unnecessary. As a result, governors are putting in place their own action plan to address the inspection priorities.

The local authority responded to the inspection outcomes by working with you to consider key improvement priorities and to allocate additional support to help staff in the drive for improvement. Their statement of action relates to the plan you have jointly created which will pull all improvement work together tightly. It identifies the use of expertise from other schools and training courses as well as the support of individuals with relevant expertise. The plan does not identify expectations of all the advisers working with the school sufficiently clearly so there is a risk of duplication of tasks and of the information required of leaders. Improvements will be monitored through the governing body monitoring board which brings together school leaders, governors and advisers, to review progress and the impact of support. As a result of this visit, the plan, particularly the indicators of how success will be measured within it, will be further developed.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Central Bedfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**