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13 January 2015

Jen Howlett  
Headteacher  
Sawtry Junior School  
Middlefield Road  
Sawtry  
Huntingdon  
PE28 5SH

Dear Miss Howlett

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sawtry Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 January 2015, 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 September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- share good practice between teachers to raise the challenge for more able pupils.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, another senior leader, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school strategic development plan and the termly operational plans were evaluated. Accompanied by you, I visited a range of lessons, looking at pupils' work and

examples of teachers' marking. I also spoke to pupils about their learning. With the acting assistant headteacher, I looked at assessment information relating to pupils' attainment and progress.

## **Context**

You took up post as the substantive headteacher 10 days prior to the last inspection in September 2014. There have been no significant changes in staffing since that time. One member of the senior team is currently acting as assistant headteacher because the school is without a deputy headteacher. The deputy headteacher post has been advertised and interviews are due to be held soon.

## **Main findings**

Since your appointment as headteacher you have rapidly gained an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have set a clear direction for improvement. As a result, standards are beginning to rise and the quality of pupils' work is improving. Staff are starting to use information about pupils' attainment to plan lessons that more accurately meet their needs. As a result, the most able pupils are learning more and pupils who need support receive it.

The school's strategic development and termly operational plans detail timely and pertinent actions. The person responsible for the actions to be completed is clearly identified as is how the impact of these actions will be monitored. You have also established how you will evaluate the impact of this work. However, the plans do not always state how you will measure the difference your actions are making to pupils' learning. This is important to do so that you are aware of what is working in improving outcomes for pupils.

You are holding teachers to account for the quality of their teaching and for pupils' progress. Individual staff support plans have been put into place where needed and whole school training needs have been identified. Teachers have been supported to set more challenging long term targets for pupils and know they are responsible for pupils achieving these. You plan to extend the new tracking system you have started to implement, this is sensible but it is too early to judge if this will enable senior leaders to keep a close check on pupils' progress.

Pupils are positive about the change to the house point system and talk about this with confidence and pride. They feel that it is supporting the improvement of behaviour. Pupils understand this simple system and respond well to it. As a result behaviour in lessons is more focused which in turn is contributing to pupils now making more rapid progress.

Pupils in Year 6 are being prepared well for the next stage in their education. Currently an above average proportion are working at the higher Level 6 in mathematics.

The governing body have carried out a skills audit and have used the outcome to reorganise how they work. In order to be less dependent on the information you provide and to understand more effectively the new data approach, the governing body have recognised the need to be trained in data analysis, however, this hasn't yet taken place. They are currently developing ways to establish a rigorous evidence base on which they can judge and evaluate the school's work and are planning to include a broader range of governor visits, subject reviews and attainment analysis for groups. Governors are beginning to use the outcomes from teachers' performance reviews to support decisions regarding pay increases.

### **External support**

Since the last inspection, the local authority has increased the level and range of support provided to the school which has already resulted in demonstrable benefits. The support package includes the mentoring of senior leaders and subject consultant visits. The impact of this is evident in the improved teaching of mathematics and in the way the classroom environment supports pupils' to learn. Joint observations of teaching have been carried out and support has been given to staff to improve their teaching. This has raised expectations, particularly in Year 6 and is ensuring that pupils are being challenged to do their best.

The local authority has also arranged partnership development opportunities with other schools; these are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and are supporting leaders to share and develop good practice. You are benefitting from the support of a more experienced mentor.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Mary Rayner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy