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Mrs Jacqueline Boyle  
Headteacher  
Westoning Lower School  
High Street  
Westoning  
Bedford  
MK45 5JH

Dear Mrs Boyle

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Westoning Lower 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 February 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- evaluate more precisely the effectiveness of the teaching assistants' work when monitoring the quality of teaching
- ensure that external advice and training make a real difference to the quality of leadership and to pupils' progress in all years.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the acting deputy headteacher. I met four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met a local authority representative. I looked at pupils' books, reviewed the school's improvement plan and checked the single central record for newly appointed staff.

## **Context**

At the beginning of this term a new Year 4 teacher joined the school and the Year 2 class teacher was appointed acting deputy headteacher until July 2015.

## **Main findings**

The school is improving rapidly. With the support of staff, you are raising expectations, improving assessment and marking, sharpening up your monitoring of the quality of teaching and ensuring the consistent application of policies across the school. You have reversed the decline in standards and results in 2014 show significant improvement. Current pupils make good progress in most years. Pupils achieve well in the early years foundation stage and at Key Stage 1. They make good progress in their phonics and handwriting. The new teacher in Year 4 has established good relationships with her class and, as a newly-qualified teacher, is receiving good support from staff, from you as her mentor and from the local authority. You are checking the progress of the more able pupils more carefully and you acknowledge that further work is required to increase the proportion of pupils exceeding expectation. More able pupils should have opportunities to apply their skills, for example, through more complex investigations in science and solving challenging problems in mathematics.

With the support of all staff you are improving the leadership of teaching. The local authority and the school improvement partner are helping you to judge the quality of teaching with increasing accuracy. Teachers respond well to the more frequent monitoring. They are willing to do their best and understand what needs to be done to tackle weaknesses. The teaching assistants I spoke with welcome the importance given to their role. They find the new ways of working with the class teacher fulfilling: they appreciate the regular weekly meetings and access to the detailed lesson planning. However, you are not giving teaching assistants sufficiently precise feedback on how to improve their work further, particularly when supporting more able pupils.

The school development plan is a useful tool to bring about rapid change. It clearly shows how the key issues identified at the last inspection will be addressed. With governors, the local authority and the school improvement partner, you conduct frequent reviews of the school's progress. The environment for learning and resources are well organised. You check that the management of behaviour is consistent across all classes through the 'Good to Be Green' board and this helps pupils to develop excellent attitudes to learning. You insist on good displays of pupils' work and the quality of pupils' extended writing is improving.

You are using a range of strategies to ensure that more parents are fully satisfied with the school. One parent made a specific appointment to tell me about the improved communication with parents, in particular, the immediate letter sent to families following incidents such as a bumped head. You run a parents' forum, meet

parents regularly and make yourself available as often as possible when parents drop off their children in the morning. The school's newsletter and website are also being improved. Governors welcome the views of parents and are due to launch a parents' survey soon.

### **External support**

Staff receive support in school, attend training and observe outstanding practice in other schools. Teachers' up-to-date knowledge of the curriculum, their better planning of lessons, their improved assessment and more precise marking of pupils' work are examples of the successful joint work with the Harlington Area Schools Trust and the local authority's Improving Teaching Programme. You are working well with the headteacher of an outstanding school.

The school's challenge partner and the local authority provide effective guidance to develop subject and senior leadership skills. The local authority funds many of these initiatives. You are also linking with the Collaborative Learning Leadership to improve your effectiveness as a school leader. However, governors do not receive sufficient information on the difference these projects make to the quality of education and the leadership of the school. They need this evaluation to check that the school is not becoming over-dependent on outside help and to ensure that improvement is sustained in the long term when external support is reduced.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**