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Miss Karen Wallace  
Headteacher  
King's Ford Junior School  
Gloucester Avenue  
Shrub End  
Colchester  
CO2 9AZ

Dear Miss Wallace

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of King's Ford Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 28 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 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 March 2014. 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 Essex.

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2014

- Improve teaching by:
  - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - ensuring that pupils develop better writing skills and cover the full range of mathematics required
  - ensuring that pupils present their work neatly, using well-formed handwriting and accurate spelling
  - ensuring that younger pupils can use letter sounds confidently in order to improve their writing and spelling.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - providing governors with straightforward assessment information so that they can compare pupils' achievement with the national picture
  - providing guidance on what is to be taught in each subject, and monitoring the curriculum more effectively
  - providing training to raise teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of the work pupils should produce in each subject
  - taking steps to improve occasional incidents of misbehavior on the playground

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 28 January 2015**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, the English subject leaders and a representative of the local authority. With the deputy headteacher, the inspector visited all classes, looked at pupils' books and spoke to them about their learning; she also observed reading lessons. A range of documentation was scrutinised including the school priority plan, achievement data, local authority records of visit, and meetings and records of governing body meetings. The inspector considered pupils' achievement and the school's work to address the areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection which took place in March 2014.

### **Context**

Since the last visit in September, the Year 4 and the Year 6 teachers have left the school. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are teaching Year 6 and a temporary teacher is responsible for the Year 4 class. There has been a significant increase in the proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care, and those with a parent in the armed forces).

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

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have continued to show determination to improve both the quality of teaching and the standards attained by pupils. There is, however, a slowing of momentum because, between them, they have taken on the responsibility for teaching Year 6. This decision was not taken lightly and is supported by governors because the school has been unable to recruit a strong teacher to this position. It is regarded as the most effective means of enabling the oldest pupils to overcome past underachievement and reach their potential.

Weaker teaching is being improved through training, support and, where appropriate, more rigorous challenge. Leaders' work is enhanced by the specialist support given to teachers from local schools and academies. Teachers' expectations are higher, particularly for the standards pupils are reaching in their writing. Lessons are more challenging and interesting and, as a result, pupils' behaviour is improving. There is still some inconsistency in quality; for example, in the marking of pupils' work. Some teachers mark effectively, enabling pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do next, while others provide guidance that is not as helpful.

Leaders of English and mathematics have received support to develop their leadership roles. The English leaders, both recently appointed, have a detailed understanding of the weaknesses that need addressing and of the actions that are

needed to bring about improvement. They are not yet monitoring the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement. The deputy headteacher has provided training for all staff in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and the English subject leader has improved how spelling is taught in upper Key Stage 2. There is early evidence that pupils' spelling skills are improving. Attention given to improving handwriting and presentation means that pupils are making greater efforts to present their work appropriately. While the quality of this varies, it is improving.

Current assessment information shows that pupils continue to make improved progress; more pupils are on track to reach nationally expected standards. This is because leaders are using analysis of pupils' achievement to target teaching carefully. For example, in Year 3, a majority of pupils have been assessed as having a limited understanding of how to use letter sounds to read and spell. Staff have received extra training and pupils are being given extra support to help them develop these key skills.

Governors have acted to address all the recommendations in the review of governance. They have received further training on data analysis and understand the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement. This includes how well the pupil premium funding is used to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, and how well pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are supported to make good progress. Minutes of governing body and committee meetings show that governors are holding school leaders to account for improving standards where these are weaker.

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

- All staff are determined to make a difference; expectations of improvement and success are shared by all leaders and governors. Morale is higher. Almost all classrooms are lively and more focused on learning. Displays help pupils to understand what is expected of them. As one pupil said of their teacher in a mathematics lesson, 'We enjoy it because she makes sure we know what we're doing and she makes it fun.'
- Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress happens regularly. Pupils who are underachieving are identified so that teachers can provide extra help or specific interventions can be put in place to help these pupils reach their potential.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils enables them to reach standards that are similar to or better than their peers in school and pupils nationally.
- The new strategies for teaching reading are helping pupils to improve their vocabulary and to develop a better understanding of the plot of stories, and

of how writing can be structured for different purposes. Pupils said that they are learning more and that they understand their reading better.

- Behaviour has improved. All staff are taking greater responsibility for managing pupils' behavior. There have been no exclusions this term, and the number of incidents recorded in the behavior log is reduced.

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

- The slowing of the pace of improvement has been caused by the lack of leaders' time to monitor teaching and to provide frequent guidance to staff on how well they are meeting expectations and on how they can improve. Leaders other than the headteacher and deputy headteacher require training to undertake this role effectively. Although training is planned, improvement time is being lost.
- The school's priority plan includes too many actions and too much information for leaders to manage while they are also teaching. Actions and their intended impact are not sharp enough. Arrangements and responsibilities for monitoring whether actions are effective are not scheduled tightly enough.

### **External support**

The local authority has continued to provide support through the work of a standards and excellence commissioner. With two colleagues, she has most recently led a review of teaching and learning. This has endorsed the school's judgements and usefully helped to identify the next improvements required. The joint improvement board, which includes leaders from the adjacent infant school, has continued to meet. The work of this group has focused more on transition between the schools than on supporting the drive for improvement at the junior school. This has contributed to the identified loss of momentum.

The school has received good support from the local teaching school alliance, which is providing effective training to enable individual teachers to improve their teaching. A local academy is providing specialist support to develop the role and work of subject leaders, which is increasing capacity, and a local primary school headteacher has provided leadership advice. Currently, this is managed effectively. However, without a tight enough plan, there is the potential for staff to feel overwhelmed by different advice.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Implement a more sharply focused priority plan and monitoring schedule which pulls together and directs the work of senior leaders and others supporting the drive for improvement.