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6 February 2015

Mrs Shelah Surgey  
Headteacher  
Tithe Farm Primary School  
Tithe Farm Road  
Houghton Regis  
Dunstable  
LU5 5JB

Dear Mrs Surgey

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tithe Farm Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 5 February 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 November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure that effective systems are in place to check on the quality of teaching in all subjects and its impact on pupils' learning
- ensure that all adults are deployed effectively to support children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- ensure that governors are regularly provided with up-to-date information about pupils' attainment and progress.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meeting with you, the deputy headteacher, the mathematics co-ordinator, three members of the governing body and a

representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school's plans for improvement and other related documentation. I visited all classrooms to observe teaching and learning, looked at the work in pupils' books from across the school and spoke to some Year 6 pupils about their work.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, three teachers have left the school. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and a teacher has returned to school following a maternity leave.

## **Main findings**

Senior leaders, including governors, were disappointed with the outcome of the previous inspection but recognise that improvements are required if the school is to achieve a judgement of good at its next inspection. Although plans have been developed, to address the weaknesses that were identified, these have not yet resulted in the required improvements. For example, a system for checking the work in pupils' books has been introduced but it lacks precision and does not help school leaders to identify strengths or weaknesses in teaching and learning. Some of the work seen in pupils' books during this inspection was of good quality, with teachers providing helpful advice to pupils' about how to make further improvements. However, in other instances pupils' work was of poor quality and little or no guidance was being provided by the teacher. Other weaknesses that were identified at the previous inspection, such as the use of teaching assistants in the Early Years Foundation Stage, have not been addressed. Consequently, barriers to improvement remain and the progress pupils are making in their learning continues to be restricted.

The school now tracks pupils' progress regularly and school leaders meet with teachers to review pupil progress each term. However, data relating to progress is not routinely shared with the governing body. Nor are governors fully aware of the targets that have been set for improvement. This means that governors are not well placed to ask challenging questions of senior leaders about the quality of teaching and the impact on learning.

A review of governance was carried out in May 2015 and new governors have recently been appointed, bringing a greater level of expertise to the governing body. Governors recognise that their systems for checking the school's work and holding school leaders to account require further improvement. However, they are committed to ensuring that the necessary improvements are made and are currently working with a national leader of governance to improve their effectiveness.

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 has a good understanding of the school's strengths and the weaknesses that are currently affecting the school's work. It has provided a higher level of support and challenge to school leaders recently but this has not yet had the desired impact. Training and in-school support has also been provided for teachers and links with a local school have given staff from Tithe Farm the opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues in order to improve teaching and learning. Again, it is too early to see the impact of this work.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Chair of the Governing Body  
cc. Local authority