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19 March 2015

Elizabeth Gallagher  
Headteacher  
Elms Farm Community Primary School  
Dorncliffe Avenue  
Sheldon  
Birmingham  
B33 0PJ

Dear Mrs Gallagher

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Elms Farm Community Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 and 19 March 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in October 2013. 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 Interim Executive Board, and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Philip Jarrett  
**Additional Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2013**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good or better by ensuring that:
  - teachers match work in lessons to pupils' individual needs, especially to extend learning for more-able pupils
  - pupils are given enough time to get on with activities or work by themselves
  - teachers question pupils skilfully to check how well they are doing in lessons and make adjustments to teaching when necessary.
  
- Improve progress in reading, writing and mathematics for all groups of pupils by giving them:
  - regular opportunities to use and apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills in a range of subjects
  - time to respond to comments in teachers' marking so that they can understand how to improve their work.
  
- Ensure leaders and governors accelerate the pace of improvement by:
  - using information from checks on teaching more rigorously to improve the quality of teaching, with a greater emphasis on its impact on learning and progress
  - giving governors the training they need to fully understand performance data and challenge leaders over the results
  - analysing in detail the impact of pupil premium spending on eligible pupils' progress and making adjustments where needed as a result.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 18–19 March 2015**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met on several occasions with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. He also met with the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), the headteacher of the school providing operational support, and a second headteacher responsible for managing the programme of support on behalf of the local authority. The inspector scrutinised documentation such as minutes of meetings of the IEB and the Monitoring Task Force (MTF), assessment records, samples of pupils' work, and school development plans. He observed six lessons jointly with members of the senior leadership team and conducted a learning walk. The inspector also met separately with two classroom teachers. The monitoring inspection focused especially on the three areas of weakness identified in the section 5 report.

### **Context**

There are no teachers new to the school since the last monitoring visit. However, a subject leader for English has been appointed and she is due to take up her post after Easter. Pupil numbers continue to fluctuate significantly. For example, nearly half of the pupils in Year 6 have joined the school in the last two years; this includes a number of pupils who are new to this country.

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

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely together and form an effective and hard-working team who have set a clear strategic direction for the school. Flexible use of other senior leaders has been helpful, especially in driving forward improvements in English and mathematics. With other members of staff, senior leaders have created an orderly and purposeful learning environment and ensured that new pupils are successfully and speedily integrated. The emphasis on improving teaching and learning across the school has had a positive impact and been welcomed by staff. Teachers appreciate the clarity of the process and the detailed feedback they are given. This has contributed to a sense of collaboration and team work. Senior leaders have gained the confidence of the IEB and the MTF who believe, as a result, that there is a good capacity for further improvement in the school. The IEB provides valuable support and challenge in areas such as policy development, use of Pupil Premium funding, and staffing. They are well aware of strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and achievement.

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

- Pupils are keen to learn and they behave well
- School assessments suggest that standards are continuing to rise in English and mathematics, especially for pupils who have been in the school for a reasonable period of time

- Standards of writing have improved considerably, with a greater emphasis on extended tasks and opportunities to develop writing across the curriculum
- There is a rigorous focus on the quality of teaching and learning, and action plans for individual teachers are well used to identify areas for improvements
- Teachers are generally positive about recent changes, welcoming the clearer sense of direction and the support given to improve their classroom practice
- Teachers can identify the ways in which their own practice has improved and what more needs to be done
- The MTF conducts a regular, formal review of teaching and learning, involving experienced headteachers and inspectors, that provides helpful feedback on progress
- Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching are rigorous and well understood by staff
- There is a high-quality school policy on marking that places appropriate emphasis on the importance of dialogue and helping pupils to improve
- Regular pupil progress meetings identify areas of concern and are increasingly regarded as helpful and collaborative by staff
- A high level of support from parents is evident in a recent questionnaire that showed considerable confidence in all key areas of the school, including teaching, behaviour and school leadership.

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

- Gaps in subject knowledge and/or pedagogy sometimes limit the effectiveness of teaching
- Co-ordinators of foundation subjects need more opportunities to support colleagues in developing effective teaching in their area
- The marking policy is not yet implemented consistently across the school and there is too little emphasis on the identification of errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

### **External support**

External support is well managed. There is effective communication between the different partners to the process and roles are clearly understood and differentiated. Teachers value highly the links established with the support school. This has been especially helpful in moving teaching on, as well as providing good opportunities for teachers to moderate pupils' work. This has helped teacher assessment to become more accurate. The MTF provides an appropriate level of challenge to senior leaders, for instance, about judgements on teaching, the use of staff, and the accuracy of assessments at the end of different key stages.