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24 March 2015

Mrs J Angell  
Chair of Governors  
Durweston CofE VA Primary School  
Durweston  
Blandford Forum  
DT11 0QA

Dear Mrs Angell,

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Durweston CofE VA Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 23 March 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 October 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:

- strengthen communication channels between school staff, governors and parents

### **Evidence**

During the visit I met with you, senior leaders, teaching assistants, a member of the office staff, representatives from the governing body, and an external adviser. In preparation for this monitoring visit I held a telephone conversation with a local authority representative to discuss the actions taken since the most recent inspection. Together we carried out brief visits to lessons and spoke with some pupils about their work. Documents including school improvement action plans were evaluated.

## **Context**

The headteacher is currently absent from school. Three members of the governing body have resigned and have been replaced by three new governors. The deputy headteacher has relinquished her leadership responsibilities. Two teachers from within the school have been appointed as temporary, joint-acting deputy headteachers. They share the responsibility of leading the school.

## **Main findings**

Following the absence of the headteacher you have worked with determination to secure stable leadership within the school and maintain the good teaching provision currently enjoyed by all pupils. Your honesty and willingness to work closely with all members of the school community, including parents, have improved staff morale and brought about a freshness and determination from the new leadership team to secure improvements as quickly as possible. The results of a questionnaire, following the inspection, has given governors a clearer understanding of how they might work more effectively with staff to secure lasting school improvements. A further audit of staff views has also recently been carried out by an external adviser but this has yet to be shared with governors. The temporary deputy headteachers have worked closely with external advisers and you to incorporate the recommendations from the inspection into the school improvement plan. A summary of the school's priorities is to be shared with all stakeholders, including parents.

You and the deputy headteachers are working closely with an external adviser to improve staff working relations and communication channels within the school. The impact of this work in some quarters has been limited due to the absence of the headteacher. However, you have begun to ensure all members of staff take more responsibility for school improvement initiatives. To this end, teaching assistants have been provided with additional time to meet with teachers and plan their work. Those who spoke with me said they feel their work in school is more valued now and they are gaining a clearer understanding of how they can support pupils' learning and the part they have to play in the process.

During our brief visits to classrooms we saw teaching and support staff working closely together in order to support pupils successfully in learning. Pupils who spoke with me said they felt very well supported by their teachers and were keen to talk about their work. I was particularly impressed with the project work some pupils showed me and the provision for the youngest children in the school. The pupils I met in each class spoke confidently about how their teachers give them good advice on how to improve their work and that they are set challenges to complete if they finish their work early. Pupils also said they feel safe in school at all times and that bullying very rarely occurs.

The improved communication channels within the school are beginning to allow all members of staff, including governors, to be better informed about the work of the

school. Governors have gained a much clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities following their recent external review. This is allowing them to work more efficiently with the deputy headteachers in order to check on the work of the school and fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. As a result, you and your governing body say you are gaining confidence to hold the school more effectively to account.

Parents who met with me say they remain loyal to the school despite the recent disruption in leadership. However, they are keen to be kept more regularly up-to-date with the changes taking place in the school. Some parents say they are worried by the lack of a headteacher's presence in school and that this may impact negatively on pupils' good achievement. Teachers are fully aware of this perception and are working determinedly with senior leaders to maintain good provision for all pupils. Parents have welcomed the recently established parents' forum. Parents who attended the inaugural meeting and spoke with me said they value this regular opportunity to have their views and opinions listened to.

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 school is wisely drawing on a number of external partners to strengthen the leadership of the school and fully address the areas of weakness identified in the inspection report. A local authority representative has brokered a wide range of support from external partners. For example, training is being provided in order to build the confidence of support staff and develop the leadership skills of those new to their roles.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Dorset and as below.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards HMI  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**