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21 March 2014

Mrs Pamela Wenban  
Interim co-head of school  
Riverview Junior School  
Cimba Wood  
Gravesend  
DA12 4SD

Dear Mrs Wenban

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Riverview Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 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:

- clarify the school's leadership, management and governance structures
- clarify with staff, parents and pupils new leadership arrangements
- improve the school's action plan so that it is fit for purpose.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your interim co-head of school. I also met with members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your list of urgent matters and you led me on a tour of the school. I also looked at a range of the school's documentation.

## **Context**

Since my last visit, the headteacher has announced her intention to retire and is working on projects from home. Two interim co-heads of school have been appointed. Three members of staff are currently absent from school. Their work is being undertaken by long-term supply cover. The Chair of the Governing Body was not available at the time of this inspection. The local authority has arranged for two local leaders of education to oversee the school's work in the short term.

## **Main findings**

The school did not respond appropriately or quickly enough to my first monitoring visit. Actions required to address the areas for improvement at the last full inspection have stalled. Sudden, but necessary, changes to staffing have slowed progress in one year group. Parents are rightly concerned. The headteacher and the members of the governing body acted too slowly to rectify this situation. The local authority acted decisively as soon as it was aware of the full extent of parental concerns. They checked that these concerns were well-founded. The local authority also discovered a range of other aspects of the school's work which were a cause for concern. As a result, the local authority, working with the full governing body, has justifiably started a process that means new leadership arrangements will be in place by 30 April 2015.

You and your interim co-head of school have taken swift action to deal with some of the most urgent matters. You have increased pupils' learning time by changing the timings of the school day. Assemblies are shorter and more sharply focused. Each half of the school has a 'praise' assembly each week. Pupils' successes are celebrated by their friends and the staff. Further learning time has been saved by removing the daily flag-raising ceremony. You have changed the rule to allow pupils to wear their shoes in school. This has also reduced the amount of time lost from lessons as pupils no longer have to pause to put on their plimsolls. Together, you and your interim co-head of school, have taken time to meet parents informally before school and at the end of each day. You have increased also the frequency and quality of formal communication with parents by sending out weekly newsletters. As a result, parents' concerns about communication are reducing.

You have taken steps to strengthen leadership across the school. With the local authority, you have arranged for good quality training to be provided for middle

leaders. In addition, you have appropriately changed the style of staff meetings. These weekly meetings are now more sharply focused on training teachers and teaching assistants. Although this has happened recently, teachers and governors report that already staff morale has improved. All teachers and teaching assistants worked purposefully with their pupils during the inspection.

Many of the school's administrative systems are not good enough. You acknowledge this. They are too dependent on a single member of staff. For example, the version of the action plan which I commented on in December 2014 had not been shared with senior leaders. Other important emails have not always reached the right person. Not all governors have all the information they need to check the schools' work properly. The record of behaviour incidents has not been maintained fully since January 2015 and is still not up-to-date. Not all safeguarding procedures have been followed in a timely manner. Some important school information was missing from the office at the time of the inspection. Members of the governing body, as well as representatives of the local authority, are gravely concerned about this and you agree.

The information for which you or your interim co-head of school are responsible is well maintained and helpful. It shows, for example, that attendance continues to rise and is now above the national average. Pupils' achievement is also rising steadily. It remains slower in writing than in reading and mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 are making good progress with a large minority reaching higher levels of attainment. This is because you have supported staff skilfully to improve the quality of their teaching. You are checking teachers' work more regularly by holding them to account through rigorous, regular pupil progress meetings.

The local authority is supportive of the actions you are taking. It is aware of the need to clarify the leadership arrangements as quickly as possible. It is also aware that the existing action plan is no longer fit for purpose and that a new one is needed immediately. You have created a sensible list of urgent matters for your attention. You are clear that this list needs to be converted into a new action plan. Leaders at all levels communicated real willingness to improve the school for the good of the pupils.

## **External support**

Until recently the school resisted external support. At the first monitoring visit, I suggested visiting other schools where there is known good practice from which Riverview's leaders could learn. This did not happen. The local authority has now brokered support from two local leaders of education which will begin in April 2015. Local authority officers are already providing focused support for the interim leaders. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this work on pupils' attainment or progress. In February 2015, an external assessor contributed significantly to the local authority's assessment of the school's progress against the areas for improvement set out at the last inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**