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22 April 2015

Ms Susan Deacon  
Westwood Farm Junior School  
Fullbrook Crescent  
Tilehurst  
Reading  
Berkshire  
RG31 6RY

Dear Ms Deacon

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Westwood Farm Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 April 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 December 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 leaders have a clear and well-communicated vision for swift improvement
- re-draft the school action plan to ensure it identifies:
  - clear actions linked to specific outcomes
  - who will check the impact that the school's work is having and when they will do it
  - governors' role in the school's improvement journey.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, and the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I contacted a representative of the local authority by telephone. With you, I visited several classrooms, talked to pupils and looked at their work. In addition, I met with two subject leaders and looked at a selection of pupils' books. I evaluated the school improvement plan.

## **Main findings**

Leaders are only now beginning to recognise the different approach required to ensure the school becomes good. As a result, the pace of improvement has been slow. School leaders have not taken the removal of special measures as an opportunity to think strategically about how, precisely, the school will become a good school. This lack of vision is reflected in short term improvement plans which are not clear or sharp enough. Imprecise objectives are matched by ill-defined actions. There is no indication of who will check the impact of any actions, or when they will be achieved. Governors reflect that the current action plan does not allow them to monitor improvements or challenge senior leaders as they should. In addition, they are concerned that difficulty in recruitment of teachers is a barrier to rapid improvement.

Early work with new subject leaders is encouraging, but has yet to show impact on teaching or on pupils' achievement in these subjects. Partly, this is due to the fact that leadership development in the school is not well planned.

Useful training for teachers on questioning and on challenging the most able pupils has taken place, and is starting to improve practice in some areas. More training is planned to help teachers match work to pupils' abilities more successfully. Positive curriculum developments are now in place with pupils now enjoying more wide-ranging opportunities such as a partnership with a school in Ghana.

Senior leaders continue to hold pupil progress meetings with teachers and hold them to account for the progress pupils make in their classes. In some year groups, teachers are taking more responsibility for implementing improvements. As a result, rates of progress for some year groups are starting to improve. The inclusion manager's work with teachers is starting to bear fruit and pupils with special educational needs are now making better progress. Moreover, the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing. The school's new writing scheme is now fully in place and there are early signs of a positive impact on the standards of pupils' writing. However, rates of pupils' progress remain inconsistent across the school.

Teachers' feedback to pupils remains variable. Some very good practice questions pupils and makes them think about how to improve their work. In many books,

however, comments are limited to general congratulation and work is still not challenging enough.

Governors remain very committed to supporting the school's improvement. However, they are finding it difficult to recruit new governors to fill vacancies. Currently the governing body has only four non-teaching members. These small numbers have made it more difficult for the governing body to grasp the different challenges they face for the school to become good. They have not written an action plan for their work, and did not contribute to the school's action plan. Whilst, quite rightly, their visits to school have continued, they do not offer enough challenge to senior leaders about the pace of improvement which they recognise has slowed. The limitations of the current school action plan make it difficult for governors to monitor actions and their impact.

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 shares concerns about how the pace of improvement has slowed in the school. Regular monitoring visits take place, and a recent focussed visit to review pupils' behaviour resulted in some appropriate actions by the school, including the appointment of a lunchtime supervisor to lead the duty team. The school is partnered with a local outstanding school and benefits from the support of the local leader of education who leads this school. Links with the local secondary school have been instigated and are useful, for example in checking the accuracy of the assessment of Year 6 English work and providing support with the teaching of mathematics. Further links with other subjects would benefit the school's plans to widen the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Anwar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**