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17 June 2015

Sarah Hussey  
Headteacher  
Northwood Primary School  
Wyatts Lane  
Northwood  
Cowes  
PO31 8PU

Dear Miss Hussey

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Northwood Primary School**

Following my visit to your academy on 17 June 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2015. 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 academy should take further action to:

- ensure that plans to improve governance include more urgent timescales, particularly related to their review of the academy's progress data and the impact of the pupil premium on pupils' progress
- ensure that actions to improve the academy are measured and evaluated precisely by their impact on pupils' achievement
- insist that teachers' lesson planning focuses more explicitly on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, a group of governors and a group of middle leaders. You accompanied me on short visits to all classes to observe teaching and I scrutinised a small sample of pupils' writing. I

spoke to a member of Hampshire local authority on the telephone and also met a group of Year 5 pupils. The academy improvement plan and the recent review of governors and accompanying action plan, in addition to the review of the pupil premium spending, were evaluated. I also scrutinised information about pupils' current progress.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection a review of governance and the academy's use of the pupil premium has taken place, commissioned through Hampshire local authority.

## **Main findings**

The judgement that the academy required improvement came as no surprise to you. You had already identified many weaknesses in the academy's leadership and quality of teaching and had begun to tackle them before the inspection. The inspection judgement has given you a clear mandate to expedite some necessary changes and channel your considerable energy, expertise and knowledge of the academy in the right direction.

You have raised teachers' expectations, made key changes to the way that mathematics is taught, ensured a more thorough and reflective approach to the teaching of writing and revived concentration on phonics and wider reading. These changes are beginning to have a positive impact on outcomes for pupils. You are justly proud of the improvements being made, although as a highly critical and reflective headteacher, you are quite rightly not satisfied with all you see and are pushing for more rapid improvement.

You have wisely made some far-reaching changes to structures in the academy which are to be implemented in September 2015. You have made shrewd decisions about middle leadership in the academy, which is not before time. For example, phase leaders who are on the upper payscales are to be given responsibilities for English and mathematics, to enable them to have more of an overview of their areas and to ensure progress through the key stages. In this way, you are better placed to hold leaders to account for their work across the whole academy.

You have also made changes to the structure of classes. You have wisely identified that grouping pupils in mixed age classes is not leading to the fast rates of progress you require because some teaching has been complacent. The most able pupils have not been stretched and disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs have not caught up. A new class structure will be in place in September 2015. While these are sensible strategic decisions, it is too soon to assess the impact.

The action plan to improve the academy focuses directly on the areas for improvement. It has been shared with staff and everyone is clear about what they

are working towards. Your timescales and milestones for improving pupils' achievement are ambitious and appropriate. However, the plan does not contain enough detail about how improvements will be carried out, what training teachers will need and in some cases, exactly how you will measure success by improvements in pupils' achievement.

Teaching in the academy shows clear signs of improvement. Pupils commented particularly on the improved teaching in mathematics. They are using more problem solving strategies, topics are more interesting and their mathematical reasoning is being exercised. Pupils also talked with great enthusiasm about the topics they have been exploring for their writing. The curriculum was already a strength of the school, but teachers are beginning to stretch pupils more and insist upon higher standards of work, through better quality marking and feedback. The 'publishing books' for edited and improved writing have proved to be a great hit with pupils. They are proud of their work and while they feel 'under more pressure' they also feel more confident about meeting their targets in the end of key stage tests. Your recent assessment of pupils' writing across the academy supports the pupils' view and indicates that levels in writing are improving, particularly for boys and the most able pupils.

You can also point to great improvements in the teaching of early reading in the phonics screening results. This is as a result of a coherent approach, building on the good practice in the early years but also making effective use of the expertise of teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils are now spelling and reading with more confidence and fluency.

Your work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is not as far advanced. You are able to point to significant improvements in closing the achievement gap for current Year 5 pupils, but you are acutely aware that this is not as positive in every year group. Strategic planning for this group of pupils is in its infancy and not enough is being done to tackle the performance of disadvantaged pupils at classroom level. It is evident that some staff have taken a big step forward in understanding the needs of disadvantaged pupils in their classes, and pupils are benefiting from some useful and effective interventions and extra help. However, planning for pupils in day-to-day lessons is less sharp and determined.

The reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium were carried out at the beginning of June 2015. Governors now have a range of helpful recommendations and an outline improvement plan which they have already amended and updated in the light of actions achieved. The pupil premium review highlights a range of sensible recommendations to improve the academy's work to support disadvantaged pupils and accelerate their progress.

Governors have had relevant training for their roles, terms of reference have been established and more visits to the school have been planned. Some governors

resigned their position following the section 5 inspection and others have been recruited for September 2015. The new governors recruited come from a range of professional backgrounds, including education.

During the monitoring inspection it was clear that governors are not working with the same levels of energy and urgency as you are. Governors found it difficult to point to specific improvements in the academy since the inspection, even though these were clearly evident during the monitoring visit. Some time was understandably lost during the period of review and while recruiting new governors. However, it is crucially important that no momentum is lost during the months following the section 5 inspection. Some actions in the plan following the review need to be implemented without delay. For example, some meetings have not been minuted when they would provide useful evidence of challenge and analysis from governing body members.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

You have made effective use of available support and wisely commissioned support from Hampshire local authority, notably guidance for mathematics and English teaching and a partnership with a leadership learning partner from a mainland school.

The newly established team of governors would benefit from links with an effective governing body in a good or rapidly improving school. In addition, similar links with effective schools would enhance the training and development of subject leaders, particularly in their monitoring and evaluation work across the whole academy.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce

**Her Majesty's Inspector**