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Mr Justin Wrench
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wrench

Serious weaknesses second monitoring inspection of Shalford Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 December 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in January 2015. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Essex.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2015

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise attainment and rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can do, especially the most able
 - checking the work that pupils do in mathematics to ensure that they have fully mastered their key numeracy skills
 - improving the quality of marking, particularly in mathematics, so that pupils know exactly what they need to improve.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - equipping all subject and other leaders with the skills they need to monitor pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics
 - ensuring all subject and other leaders monitor teaching carefully and play their part in driving school improvement forward.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10 December 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you and we observed teaching and learning in all of the classrooms. I looked at the work in pupils' books and talked informally to pupils. I also met with the assistant headteacher, the leader of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, two members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. I looked at achievement information, safeguarding records and self-evaluation documents.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, a temporary teacher has been replaced with a class teacher in the Year 5 and Year 6 classroom. A new teaching assistant started at the school in October 2015; she works part-time, supporting pupils with special educational needs in Year 1 and Year 2. The governing body is considering the future status of the school by consulting with the local authority and a number of academy trusts. The local authority's improvement board continues to monitor the progress of the school. It is chaired by a local authority representative and includes members of the governing body.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since the previous monitoring inspection, you have overseen the refurbishment of part of the school. This provides additional teaching and meeting spaces, and a new library. This has transformed a poorly organised and ill-used area. This transformation is indicative of your determination to improve not just the learning environment but also the quality of teaching and learning experiences for all of the pupils at the school. You and other leaders are addressing the areas of improvement from the section 5 inspection with vigour and drive. You have identified new priorities as things have moved on, ensuring that the school is on a continual journey of improvement.

The Chair and members of the Improvement Board have led the monitoring of school improvement and the challenge to you and other leaders. However, the board is now handing back this responsibility to the governing body as governors become increasingly more effective in their roles. The governing body supports you well but also now challenges you to ensure that all of the pupils are making good progress. For instance, they check that the school uses the pupil premium funding effectively to close the gaps in achievement for disadvantaged pupils.

You acted quickly following the previous monitoring inspection to improve attendance. You have raised the profile of attendance with the school community by reporting it in regular newsletters to parents. You have introduced rewards for pupils, which are serving as popular incentives. You now follow up falling attendance

with letters home and meetings with parents. Consequently, attendance has improved from below to above the national average.

As result of training, coaching and regular feedback, teaching continues to improve. You have identified where teaching does not match the best in the school. You provide appropriate training and support and monitor pupils' progress carefully. You have addressed some inaccuracies in teachers' assessments of pupils with sensitive support and guidance.

The school's focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics has paid dividends. Pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics has improved. Daily short lessons focus on improving pupils' basic skills in addition facts for the younger pupils and multiplication tables for the older ones. The pupils now have many more regular opportunities to apply their developing skills and knowledge to solve mathematical problems and master their understanding.

You and other leaders have identified writing as the current focus for improvement. You have reviewed the school's approach to teaching writing. You have charged all of the school staff to share their ideas for how writing can improve. This approach to school improvement is effective because it draws on the skills and knowledge of all staff and everybody can see how they can play a part in making a difference.

Subject and other leaders in the school are much more effective in their roles. The leader for special educational needs measures the impact of additional support carefully and makes changes when progress is not improving quickly. The leader of mathematics monitors teaching and pupils' outcomes to ensure that matters continue to improve.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The headteacher sets high expectations for the leadership team, teachers and all members of staff. School leaders and governors have equally high expectations for pupils' progress.
- The headteacher and other leaders ensure that all members of staff play their part in school improvement through their collegiate approach to finding new solutions and ways of working.
- The school tracks pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics very carefully. Leaders meet with teachers to identify pupils in danger of falling behind and ensure that they have additional support to help them catch up.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders do not have a clear view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessments in subjects other than English and mathematics. Therefore, they

have not addressed the weaknesses in some of these subjects. The quality of pupils' work in science, history and geography does not always match the quality found in English and mathematics.

- Leaders have not fully considered the early and potential pitfalls to the school's new approaches to supporting pupils who are falling behind by using older pupils as learning mentors.

External support

The school draws on external support brokered and part funded by the local authority well. Teachers and leaders have regular and appropriate training provided through the Aspire programme. The local authority support for the development of the early years is helping to secure improvements in teaching and learning in the Reception class.