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Mrs Angela Exley  
Headteacher  
Winlaton West Lane Community Primary School  
West Lane  
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Dear Mrs Exley

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Winlaton West Lane Community 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 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 May 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection in May 2013, before the one that took place in May 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement but with good leadership.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school. Leaders should take urgent action to:

- ensure that the pupil premium is targeted specifically to improve outcomes for eligible pupils
- ensure that the quality of pupils' writing improves across the school, but particularly in Key Stage 1
- ensure that more-able pupils are challenged sufficiently so they reach the higher levels of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics
- update the safeguarding policy and information on the school website
- make sure the school improvement plan has precise criteria by which success can be measured.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, a group of pupils, members of the governing body, including the new Chair of the Governing Body, and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the post-Ofsted action plan, looked at the outcomes of the review of governance and the review of the use of the pupil premium funding, reports from the local authority and other information in relation to your monitoring of the work of the school. I held a meeting with, and observed, the two assistant headteachers as they conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work. I also toured the school with you to see how well pupils were learning in different classes.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, two teachers have left, one to take up a more senior post in another school. Two teachers have been appointed. Several governors have left the governing body and, following a restructure, the governing body has reduced from 17 to 14 members. The new Chair of the Governing Body took up his role two weeks prior to this visit; four new parent governors have been appointed and another experienced governor has been co-opted onto the governing body.

## **Main findings**

The actions taken by the school to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection have not been robust enough to ensure rapid improvement. Although the post-Ofsted action plan identifies appropriate priorities, the criteria by which success can be measured are not precise enough for governors to check effectively how well the school is doing.

The challenge from governors has not been robust enough to hold the headteacher and leaders fully to account. The report on the review of governance identified a number of concerns in relation to leaders not providing timely and accurate information in advance of meetings. Minutes of some of these meetings had not been properly recorded except those completed by a local authority officer. Consequently, it was not always clear whether governors had made decisions. As a result, there was a lack of clarity, for example on the use of funding, including the pupil premium. It was also unclear whether, in response to an audit report, the actions had been fully addressed. The new Chair of the Governing Body and other governors are highly committed to ensuring that these issues are addressed. The new Chair of the Governing Body has already identified that the school website does not fully meet requirements and is aware that the safeguarding policy needs to be updated as a matter of urgency, although pupils are kept safe in the school.

The report on the review of the use of the pupil premium funding identifies a number of concerns, including that funding was not targeted specifically for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have not evaluated fully the impact of the work done to support disadvantaged pupils to ensure these pupils make as much progress as they should. Leaders have not always identified or tackled barriers which may be preventing these pupils from achieving and consequently there are gaps between the attainment of these pupils and their peers.

While leaders are checking on the work of the school on a more regular basis, this is at an early stage. They are checking on compliance with school policies and procedures, but not fully evaluating the impact of the quality of teaching on pupils' learning. For example, more-able pupils are not fully challenged to ensure they achieve the higher levels. They are often used to support other pupils, which means that valuable time to develop their own knowledge and skills is lost. During the tour of the school, we agreed that pupils are not writing as well as they are capable of, particularly in Key Stage 1. Leaders acknowledge that they need to provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in mathematics to solving problems and carrying out investigations, to make sure pupils, particularly more-able pupils, think more deeply about their learning.

Leaders have, however, taken some successful actions to help improve the quality of teaching. Pupils who spoke to me during the inspection reported that they are now beginning to receive more challenging work and that they get the help they need if they are 'stuck' with their work. They commented that marking and feedback are helping them to improve their work and that they are set specific targets to help them to produce better-quality work, for example in their writing. They enjoy choosing from the menu of homework tasks available and there is evidence in classrooms of some good-quality homework.

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**

The local authority has provided appropriate and timely support through the School Improvement Partner and consultants for English, mathematics, early years and special educational needs. The impact of their work is just beginning to 'bear fruit'. The local authority conducted the review of governance and the use of the pupil premium and provided detailed reports on how these areas could be improved. This led to a restructure of the governing body and the appointment of new governors. These governors are determined that, in future, the pupil premium funding will be targeted appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils.

The headteacher has arranged for staff to engage with a number of other schools in a local cluster in order to learn from others' practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Gateshead. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**