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20 October 2015

Ms Catherine Taylor  
Consultant Headteacher  
Kings Farm Primary School  
Cedar Avenue  
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Kent  
DA12 5JT

Dear Ms Taylor

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Kings Farm Primary School**

Following my visit with Richard Owen, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 28 and 29 September 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

- is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures
- may appoint one newly qualified teacher.

This letter and the monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2014**

- Improve teaching by ensuring that:
  - teachers have high expectations of what pupils might achieve and set work that is consistently challenging, particularly for the most-able pupils
  - the marking of pupils' work offers specific guidance as to how pupils can improve their performance
  - pupils have the opportunity to respond to marking
  - teachers have the skills necessary to ensure a more systematic approach to the teaching of reading
  - the work of learning support staff is closely monitored and consistently effective.
  
- Improve pupils' achievement, by ensuring that:
  - children enter Year 1 with appropriate knowledge and skills so they are better prepared for learning in Key Stage 1
  - pupils make accelerated progress throughout Years 1 to 6 to enable them to catch up with their peers nationally
  - the progress of disadvantaged pupils is effectively supported and closely monitored
  - pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs receive effective support which is closely monitored and enables them to make accelerated progress in line with the others.
  
- Improve leadership, management and governance by ensuring that:
  - sustained action is taken to enhance senior leaders' and governors' capacity to drive improvement
  - the knowledge, skills and effectiveness of middle leaders, including the leadership of provision for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, are developed
  - the school is better-placed to implement the new curriculum and new assessment systems
  - procedures are in place to enable school leaders to monitor and evaluate the impact of those funds specifically designated for the support of disadvantaged pupils.
  
- Improve Early Years Foundation Stage provision by:
  - improving the opportunities for children to develop their basic skills in reading, writing and number
  - ensuring that all activities are purposeful and provide greater challenge, especially for the more able
  - ensuring all staff have a thorough understanding of Early Years Foundation Stage practice
  - implementing more effective assessment procedures so that staff have an accurate view of children's knowledge and skills

- increasing opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in, and knowledgeable about, their children's learning
- improving the leadership of Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 28 and 29 September 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the consultant headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders with significant responsibilities. The lead inspector also met with groups of parents and pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a newly appointed governor, and representatives from the local authority. Teaching and learning in 14 lessons were observed, eight jointly with senior staff. The inspectors also attended assemblies and looked at pupils' workbooks. Aspects of safeguarding were checked.

### **Context**

The school entered a federation with Ifield School on 1 September 2015. There is a single governing body for both schools. A new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body have been appointed. Since the last monitoring inspection, the consultant headteacher's contract has been extended until July 2016; six teachers have left the school and seven new teachers have been appointed. There are now 50 more places available in Years 1 to 6. These are being filled rapidly and over half of the pupils joining these year groups speak little or no English.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Provisional results for the end of Key Stage 2 in the last academic year show that the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics was well below the national average. Although pupils' progress throughout Year 6 improved, this was insufficient to make up for previous underachievement and so reach national averages. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was particularly slow.

At the end of Key Stage 1, results for Year 2 were also well below national averages. Too few pupils achieved the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in writing were exceptionally low. In addition, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check (a national check of pupils' understanding of the links between letters and the sounds they make) was well below the national average for Year 1 pupils.

The proportion of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage who reached a good level of development improved, but was still below national expectations.

Lesson observation and scrutiny of pupils' work suggests that rates of progress are improving, including those of disadvantaged pupils, although variability remains between groups of pupils and across the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning continue to improve rapidly. Almost all pupils show enthusiasm for learning because they are now more engaged in their work.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching continues to improve, but is not yet consistently good in all classes. Nevertheless, throughout the school, pupils show excitement about learning, helped by positive relationships between adults and pupils. The bright, ordered environment is encouraging pupils to learn well. Teachers and teaching assistants often refer to information and examples displayed in classrooms and corridors, which pupils then use to help them solve problems. Increasingly, pupils are trying to answer questions for themselves and show satisfaction when they do so.

The Nursery provides a calm and purposeful environment which enables children to settle quickly. Teachers and teaching assistants accurately identify children's learning needs and plan activities which are suitably challenging. As a result, children are engaged in appropriate activities which sustain their interest and improve their communication skills. In the Reception classes, better use is being made of the new outside equipment and this contributes towards children's higher levels of engagement; however, the teaching observed was less effective than in the Nursery in ensuring that children's play was purposeful. Greater emphasis is now being placed on the development of literacy and mathematics. Nevertheless, children are not yet progressing fast enough for them to reach the expected standards by the end of the year.

In Years 1 to 6, some teachers, including those newly appointed to the school, are not yet identifying the learning needs of groups of pupils well enough. Consequently, some activities are too easy for some pupils, particularly the most able. Teachers are now checking more carefully what pupils know and understand in order to identify any gaps and misconceptions. While this is helpful in accelerating the progress of many pupils, this work has not yet extended to identifying the needs of most-able pupils.

Effective support by teaching assistants is promoting the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as that of other pupils who need help to catch up, including pupils with English as an additional language. Where learning is most effective, the teaching assistants and teachers work closely to provide appropriate support and challenge for the full range of pupils in the class.

As a result of well-directed training, teaching assistants are having a positive impact on learning in lessons and also on pupils' reading through small group work.

There is now a systematic approach to the teaching of reading throughout the school. Pupils are allocated time every day to improve their reading and also their grammar, punctuation and spelling; work in books shows some rapid improvement already this term.

The quality of marking has improved and is becoming more consistent. Pupils are usually given feedback to show them what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. Even so, teachers' comments are not always precise enough and, as a result, some pupils' responses are limited and their progress is hampered. Pupils do not yet have targets for reading, writing and mathematics and these are due to be set after the termly assessments have been analysed.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils benefited from a 'learning to learn' week at the start of term, which instilled clear routines and high expectations. They conduct themselves around the site in a pleasant and cheerful manner. There is a spirit of friendliness and cooperation. Pupils are polite and welcoming towards visitors. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and that instances of bullying are rare and are tackled by staff promptly and effectively. Instances of disruption in lessons are infrequent, but a few pupils still find it difficult to concentrate in lessons.

Good behaviour was observed in assemblies. Even pupils new to the school quickly understand what is expected of them. Pupils show respect for each other and are keen to participate.

Parents and carers who wrote to and spoke with the inspectors were very positive about the continued improvements at the school. They all reported how much the children are enjoying learning at school. Parents feel that communication with the school is much better. Some parents had experienced home visits from school staff prior to their children joining the Nursery and had found these useful and reassuring.

Attendance overall is improving but the attendance of disadvantaged students is not improving rapidly enough. New arrangements to reduce persistent absence are in place, but it is too soon to identify their impact.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

The headteacher continues to provide firm leadership to the school. She gives a strong and consistent message that the school is improving and becoming a happier and more successful place to learn, but that more is expected and that standards must improve rapidly. The federation with Ifield School significantly increases the

school's leadership capacity to improve. The executive headteacher of the federation, who was previously supporting the school as a national leader of education, is using her enhanced role to strengthen the leadership of Kings Farm.

The new governing body is starting to offer leaders appropriately high levels of challenge. Governors have a realistic view of the significant improvements in pupils' progress which are required. They are ambitious and believe the partnership between the two federated schools offers benefits to both. They have yet to check how well the pupil premium funding is being used to help disadvantaged pupils make better progress.

Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of specific strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and assessment, although their overall judgements are slightly generous. The headteacher has not shirked from her responsibilities in dealing with weak teaching, but there is more to be done to ensure that all teaching is consistently good so that all groups of pupils make good progress.

Systems to introduce a new curriculum and revised assessment methods were well planned and have been introduced smoothly. The local authority checked that school leaders used the new assessment criteria to accurately grade pupils' work at the end of the last academic year. This secure baseline information can now be used to set aspirational targets and track progress towards them.

A new leader of early years has been appointed. The leaders of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 continue to grow into their roles and are gaining the skills required to effectively monitor and evaluate teaching, learning and assessment. Plans are in place to address current inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and levels of attainment. Leaders at all levels are aware of the need for action plans to deliver significantly improved standards by the time of the next monitoring visit.

### **External support**

The local authority's extension of the headteacher's contract to the end of the academic year has brought much-needed stability to the school. Continued support and guidance from local authority advisers has provided useful and effective professional development for teachers and school leaders. Advisers have also checked regularly how well teachers and leaders are assessing pupils' work, which has enabled the school to be confident about pupils' prior attainment. The new senior improvement adviser has accurately evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the school.