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Ms Donna Roberts  
Head of School  
Orchard Meadow Primary School  
Wesley Close  
Oxford  
OX4 6BG

Dear Ms Roberts

**Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Orchard Meadow Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 March 2016, 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 that you gave me and for the time that you made available to discuss the actions that you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in March 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2015**

Improve teaching and enhance pupils' attitudes to learning by ensuring that all teachers:

- have high expectations for pupils, especially the most able, and set them suitably challenging work
- question pupils well to deepen learning
- use classroom activities that enable all groups of pupils to build quickly on what they have learned and can do
- make good use of teaching assistants to manage pupils and to speed up their learning.

Raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that:

- early years children have good opportunities to develop their imagination and curiosity in the outdoor area
- the books which Key Stage 1 pupils read are closely matched to their reading levels, ensuring that pupils are taught the basic skills of English grammar, punctuation and spelling to improve their writing skills
- the effectiveness of phonics teaching is rigorously checked
- pupils are provided with good opportunities to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills in mathematics.

Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:

- leaders and governors carefully check the impact of strategies used to raise the achievement of potentially vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged pupils
- more time and attention is paid to subjects beyond English and mathematics
- a suitably detailed, robust plan is implemented for raising standards in the early years.

An external review of governance and of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22 March 2016**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the head of the academy, the executive headteacher and the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), along with two governors, one of whom is a trustee. The inspector also met with two assistant headteachers. One of the assistant headteachers is responsible for early years and key stage 1, and the other is responsible for key stage 2. The inspector also held a meeting with a group of pupils selected from Years 2 to 6. A telephone call was made to the leader working in a local nursery school who has been supporting the school in improving the early years setting. Documentation relating to the checks made on staff, pupils' attendance and behaviour, the school's self-evaluation and the school's improvement plans was scrutinised. Visits were made to classes in each year except for Year 3, because its staff and pupils' were involved in a concert for parents. Parents were spoken to informally at the end of the day. Following the identification of the early years and key stage 1 as relatively weaker areas in the previous monitoring visit, this monitoring visit was largely, but not solely, focused on gathering evidence in these areas.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, new teaching staff have been appointed in Years 2, 4, 5 and in early years. Subject leaders for mathematics and numeracy have also been appointed, but have not yet fully taken up their duties. The governing body is now working as an IEB. A full-time early years leader has recently been appointed and will join the school after Easter 2016, along with a new Year 3 teacher.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders and governors (including trustees) have not made sufficient improvements either to the early years setting or to key stage 1. Some positive changes have been made, for example improvements to the way equipment is organised in the outside play area in the early years setting. The stronger teaching identified in key stage 2 at the previous monitoring visit remains strong. However, teaching remains weak in too many classes in key stage 1 and in early years.

Consequently, information based on teachers' and assistants' assessments shows that the proportion of pupils set to reach a good level of development is too low. The information shows that there is a wide gap between the proportions of boys and girls on track to reach a good level of development. Additionally, despite some improvements in a number of areas identified in the previous inspection report, advancements are too variable and not equally effective across all groups in the school. This is because leaders do not use information on pupils' progress well enough to identify what is and is not working. As a consequence, leaders have not

placed enough focus on improving some areas of the school.

Leaders, governors and trustees have not placed enough emphasis on ensuring that early years and key stage 1 are effectively led. As a result, some children in early years are not making enough progress. Members of the leaner, sharper IEB have visited the school and scrutinised information on pupils' progress. They have rightly challenged the school's leaders as to the quality of teaching in key stage 1 and the early years. However, governors and trustees have not always followed through their concerns with enough urgency. This has meant that some weak practice has been allowed to continue. For example, in early years there have not been enough improvements in the way that assistants question children to enhance their learning when they are engaged in play activities. Trustees and governors acknowledge that they need to follow up on their well-founded concerns more promptly in future.

Following the review of governance and pupil premium spending carried out last year, governors reformed the governing body into an IEB, and it is more effective. Governors and trustees now work closely with members of the school's leadership team to monitor specific areas of the school. This monitoring has led to some improvements. For instance, governors and trustees have employed additional teachers to support pupils who are falling behind, leading to improvements in some pupils' progress and learning. However, leaders have not got a clear enough overview of the impact of additional classes on pupils' achievement, including disadvantaged pupils and White British boys. Results from 2015 tests and examinations indicate that there are gaps between the achievement of pupils in these groups (especially the latter group) and other pupils in the school. Leaders know that individual pupils are making small steps in their learning. However, they have not analysed this assessment information well enough to establish which types of additional help are the most effective or whether pupils who have under achieved in the past have made enough progress to catch up.

One area where there have been improvements is in the way that the school's leaders have used specialist teachers who teach across the trust, especially music and drama teachers. For example, pupils were acting out a version of *Macbeth* which they had devised with the trust's drama teacher. Their performances showed that they had a strong grasp of the themes of the play. Pupils demonstrated that they understood the best ways to create dramatic tension using body and facial gestures. The pupils made strong progress, because the teacher had high expectations of what they could achieve. However, on occasion, leaders have been too reliant on academy-wide approaches that do not always work well in this school. Leaders have not monitored the approaches that they have imported from other schools in the trust to check that they work well enough in this school. In addition, leaders, governors and trustees have not changed tactics promptly enough when they have realised that approaches that work well in other trust schools are not working as well in this school.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The teaching of mathematics in Years 5 and 6 is strong, especially the level of challenge that teachers provide. Pupils are confident about using their mathematical reasoning to work out tricky problems and are able to explain their reasoning using correct mathematical terminology. Pupils demonstrate a genuine excitement about discovering the best way of approaching the complex mathematical problems that they often manage to solve.
- There have been some improvements to the support provided by teaching assistants in key stage 2. Some work very well with pupils and further their learning by planning carefully sequenced learning sessions in which pupils are given the opportunity to become fluent in their learning. For example, a teaching assistant was working very effectively with a group of Year 6 pupils, providing them with challenge because of the way that he supported pupils in answering their own queries. However, the strong practice seen in key stage 2 was not a common feature of the way that teaching assistants work across the school, especially in early years.
- The quality of teaching in key stage 2 is overall better than in key stage 1. The 2015 results indicate that pupils' progress in writing from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 was significantly greater than the progress that pupils with similar starting points make nationally. However, the quality of teaching in Year 4 was not as effective as that in Years 5 and 6. Pupils in Year 4 are not always clear enough about what they are learning through the tasks that they are required to complete.
- Pupils mostly behave well, especially when they are fully engaged by their learning. A number of key stage 2 pupils, including more-able pupils, said that they felt stretched by the work that they were set and could see that there were improvements in the way that they are being taught. They appreciate the trips they are taken on to stimulate their writing, such as the visit to the story museum in Oxford.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- In key stage 1, the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is not yet effective enough. The prediction for the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in phonics in 2016 is slightly higher than the actual proportion who reached the expected level in 2015. However, it is not above the national average for last year. This is because leaders have not ensured that the teaching of phonics is consistently strong. In some classes, when pupils make mistakes about the spelling of the words that the teacher sounds out, not enough time is spent ensuring that pupils properly understand what led them to make these mistakes. Some pupils' misconceptions are allowed to take root. Leaders are not keeping a close enough watch on the progress that boys and disadvantaged pupils are making across the year group.

- Leaders have now implemented a new approach to assessing pupils' progress without levels. However, it has taken too long for teachers to become fully confident in using this new approach. As a result, leaders are not yet analysing the information that teachers have gathered through their assessment of pupils' work with enough confidence and rigour. Therefore, they do not have a clear enough overview of what the information is telling them about how effective teaching is. However, they are using the information to identify pupils who need extra support.
- In key stage 1, in topic lessons which focus on non-core subjects such as history, pupils are not provided with work that is sufficiently challenging. For example, on a lesson on medieval castles, opportunities were missed to question pupils more deeply about the strengths and weaknesses of the different medieval siege weapons. Less-able pupils were not being stretched enough and were spending too much time colouring in their pictures of siege weapons rather than finding out how effective they were.
- The school's leaders and governors acknowledge that subject leadership is underdeveloped in the school. This has had a negative impact on the rate at which teaching has improved in some subjects. Subject leaders in mathematics and English have recently been appointed. They are accessing trust-wide training. It is too early to evaluate the impact of the training that they have received on pupils' progress in the subjects that they manage.
- In some classes where pupils are less stretched, they do not behave well enough. They get up from their seats too frequently and do not dedicate themselves to finishing the tasks as well as they can. Some parents said that behaviour was variable.
- Although, overall, pupils' attendance is in line with the national average, pupils' attendance in some year groups is very low, for example in Year 1 and one of the Reception classes. Leaders' actions to improve attendance are not having enough impact in these year groups.

## **External support**

External support has rightly focused on the early years and has been provided by the local authority and a local outstanding nursery provider. Despite some improvements, the support provided has not had a big enough impact on improving children's progress in early years, especially disadvantaged children and boys. The work with a local outstanding nursery has improved some aspects of the early years setting, for example the way learning activities are set up. However, children, especially boys, are not yet learning enough through their play. The school's leaders and governors are not making sure that external support is having a deep or rapid enough impact on improving the progress that boys and disadvantaged pupils make.

Support for the teaching of mathematics provided by the Hamilton Trust, one of the school's sponsors, has been effective, especially in Years 5 and 6. Senior leaders are also receiving support from an independent charity. This additional help has not yet had a big enough impact on improving children's and pupils' outcomes in early years and key stage 1.

The trustees and governors have agreed that, in the near future, more extensive support for key stage 1 will be provided by other schools in the trust.