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Mrs Tamara Mortimer  
Head of school  
West Alvington Primary School  
Kingsbridge  
Devon  
TQ7 3PP

Dear Mrs Mortimer

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to West Alvington Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on Monday 25 April 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 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 June 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 in order to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the executive headteacher, the subject leader for mathematics and four members of the governing body. A telephone call was held with a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. We conducted a joint learning walk to each class and together we scrutinised some key documents, including work from the most-able pupils at the school. We also met with some of the most-able pupils from key stage 2 to gain their view of the school.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection the school has extended its early years offer to include pre-school provision full time. This has also enabled children in Reception to be taught discretely from pupils in Years 1 and 2.

## **Main findings**

You, senior leaders and governors are implementing the much-needed changes required in order to rapidly improve the quality of the school's work. You have put the recent inspection judgement behind you and are using the findings as a catalyst for change. All staff are being held more to account through specific appraisal targets that are closely linked to the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievements.

Training for leaders is helping them improve their skills in evaluating teaching and learning. The broader range of information now being used to judge the performance of staff over time is providing a more accurate picture of pupils' everyday learning. The subject leader for mathematics is also focusing her duties more on improving the quality of teaching. Consequently, leaders are contributing more strongly to securing improvements across the school. Occasionally, monitoring activities tend to focus on whether teachers are following new policies, such as marking, rather than what difference they are making to pupils' achievements. You have plans in place to address this.

The school development plan aligns closely with the areas for development in the last full inspection report. Actions link well to the new cycle of monitoring activities to check on the changes to the curriculum and the quality of teaching. A revised set of 'non-negotiables', designed to set a minimum level of performance, is raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of during lessons. Training is helping teachers plan activities that are increasingly matched to pupils' needs. The new policy for marking and feeding back on pupils' work is helping pupils understand how well they are performing and what they need to do to improve further. Evidence from pupils' books and work on display around the school illustrate that they are producing more writing, of a higher quality, in a broader range of subjects.

Training across the school federation is complemented well by external consultancy to support teachers on their journey of improvement. It is leading to improvements to teaching, planning and marking in all classes. The introduction of time for pupils to respond to teachers' comments about their work is improving pupils' dialogue about their learning with adults and raising their achievement. Teachers are combining the new approach to planning activities in lessons carefully, with a focus on problem solving in mathematics. Older pupils' work illustrates some good examples of using alternative methods to solve problems relating to the planning and organisation of a camping trip sequence when studying mathematics in context. Pupils reported how positively these new approaches were motivating them in their learning and that behaviour across the school has improved. During our joint book

scrutiny you were quick to identify that the content of work in pupils' mathematics books is not yet meeting the full requirements of the new national curriculum for mathematics. Further training for staff is planned.

The governing body has responded proactively to the inspection findings. Governors understand the sense of urgency and specific actions required in order to become a good school. They are very active in joint monitoring activities, conducted alongside subject leaders, which also develop their skills at knowing how to challenge the school over teachers' performance. The strong willingness to undergo further training illustrates the collective desire to bring about the actions required in order to become a good school. Appropriate plans are in place to secure future improvements. However, the lack of precise detail in reports received from the school regarding the quality of teaching and pupils' progress hinders governors' ability to check exactly how successful the actions of school leaders have been.

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, your governing body and middle leaders are drawing well on the support provided from a range of external partners. Your local authority officer provides valuable external reports and training to improve the effectiveness of governors. Meetings with your federation of schools are helping teachers develop an increasingly accurate assessment of pupils' writing. Following visits by staff to local schools, new approaches to marking are providing clearer information for pupils to help them with their learning. Guidance to improve the learning environment and smooth the transition for children entering Reception from the pre-school is profound. The root and branch review conducted across the early years is significantly aiding children in their development and better preparing them for school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Devon.

Yours sincerely

Richard Light  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**