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Mrs Sylvia White  
Northolmes Junior School  
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Horsham  
West Sussex  
RH12 4ET

Dear Mrs White

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Northolmes Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 May 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 October 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in October 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with subject leaders for English and mathematics and together we looked at a sample of pupils' books. We visited several lessons to see teaching and learning. I looked at documents, including the school improvement plan, checks on teaching and pupils' progress and safeguarding information.

## **Context**

The special educational needs coordinator left the school in December 2015. The deputy head has taken on this responsibility until the new coordinator joins the school in September 2016. The headteacher will be leaving the school at the end of this academic year. The deputy headteacher will become the acting headteacher until December 2016. The mathematics leader will be the acting deputy headteacher in the autumn term of 2016.

## **Main findings**

You and your deputy are working together as an effective team and have made a positive start to tackling the areas for improvement highlighted at the last inspection. The school's action plan has clear objectives linked to the right priorities. The plan sets out helpful measures of success and you frequently review the progress the school is making and adapt your actions appropriately. This helps to ensure that you keep the school on the 'right track'. It will be crucial to the school's continued improvement for this momentum to be maintained, as changes in leadership take place.

Leaders undertake a range of monitoring activities, including looking at pupils' books and visiting lessons. This helps them to have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Leaders use this information carefully to provide useful training and support. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving. However, while there are pockets of good practice by some teachers and teaching assistants, inconsistencies remain, for instance about how well questions are used to check and deepen pupils' understanding.

Subject and year leaders are more effective than they were. They are clear about their responsibilities and relish the opportunity to lead improvement. They are checking pupils' progress and the quality of teaching carefully. They use this information thoughtfully to share good practice and provide support to their colleagues. As a result, they can pinpoint where they have had a positive impact and what they still need to work on.

Pupils are making better progress in writing. Work completed during this academic year shows that pupils are writing more frequently and at length, for a variety of purposes. You have established your English 'toolkit' for pupils: non-negotiables, for example careful proof reading, which help to raise expectations for their written work. Pupils are taking greater care over the presentation of their work and the standard of their handwriting is improving. Teachers often identify and correct pupils' mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils are frequently given spellings to learn and they collect words they think are new and exciting in their 'magpie' notebooks. As a result, pupils' vocabularies are growing and their writing is more accurate and interesting to read.

Teachers have used valuable training in mathematics to provide pupils with increased opportunities to tackle more complex problems in mathematics. 'Challenge questions' ensure pupils apply their reasoning skills and deepen their understanding of what they have learned.

Senior leaders are checking pupils' progress frequently against national curriculum expectations. All teachers receive detailed information about how well pupils are doing. Teachers are using this information effectively to identify and address gaps in pupils' understanding and to make sure that appropriate support is given to those pupils who need it.

You have established clear expectations for the feedback pupils receive. Pupils' books show that they are given detailed and specific guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils often respond to these comments from their teachers by making sure they address any issues in future pieces of work, or by attempting more challenging tasks that are set.

Governors have a strong understanding of the school and what needs to be done. Their ongoing evaluation of the school's work through consultation with parents and pupils gives them a valuable insight into its impact. They use this information effectively to look for further ways to improve and to give useful feedback to school leaders. Currently, they are rightly focused on appointing a new headteacher with the necessary skills to maintain improvement.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided useful help to the school. Their termly monitoring visits to check assessments of progress have given leaders an effective level of support and challenge. They have arranged valuable support and training for mathematics teaching from a specialist leader at the Millais School.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Moore  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**