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Miss Elspeth Shaw
Headteacher
Wilbury Junior School
Bedford Road
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Hertfordshire
SG6 4DU

Dear Miss Shaw

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wilbury Junior School

Following my visit to your school on Wednesday 2 November 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 March 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in March 2016, 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- identify clear strategies to meet the needs of the most able pupils
- act more quickly on improving the leadership of subjects.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders. I met three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to the local authority's deputy strategic lead for primary school effectiveness who is also the improvement partner for your school. You joined me on a tour of the school. I visited classrooms to look at pupils' work. I spoke to pupils and listened to some of them read. I

evaluated a range of documentation including the school improvement plan, your review of the quality of teaching, the policies for the investigation of complaints and for safeguarding pupils. I scrutinised the single central record of security checks for newly appointed staff.

Context

A new inclusion coordinator joined the school in April 2016. Several teachers left the school in July 2016 and have been replaced. Three governors recently joined the governing body. A new chair of the governing body was appointed in September 2016.

Main findings

Everyone I spoke to said that the school feels very different this term and that it is now much calmer. Pupils are particularly pleased with the improved behaviour in some classes. They also said that work was 'more fun even though it was more difficult'. Your development plan includes the right priorities for improvement, although strategies to accelerate the progress of the most able pupils are not identified clearly enough. Aspects of teaching are improving and staff receive clear feedback and guidance where improvement is required. Your work to improve attendance has been particularly successful. You are working well with a number of families where pupils' attendance is far too low.

The inclusion coordinator has successfully galvanised a team of committed teaching assistants. Their training is effective and they are now far more aware of how to target their support and work more effectively with the class teachers. The new teachers I met are happy with the induction they received. They said that there was a good team spirit at the school and that senior leaders were approachable and very helpful.

Your assessment and performance information indicate that pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than in the past. Spelling, handwriting and the use of grammar are receiving particular attention. The effective staff training and the better resources are improving standards in mathematics. Pupils' work in the Year 5 and Year 6 classes shows clear signs of improvement. Some pupils, however, have significant gaps in their knowledge due to historical weaker teaching and lack of stability in staffing. More impetus is required to improve the breadth of pupils' vocabulary and their speaking skill.

Your strategies to improve assessment and to match the work to pupils' ability are working. Teachers are more accurately identifying what pupils already understand and use this to move their learning on. They are helping pupils to improve, for example by challenging single-word answers and asking questions that deepen pupils' thinking. In an example of effective practice, seen in a Year 6 book, the teacher identified precisely what a pupil was able to do and challenged the incomplete response. This led to the pupil writing a more detailed explanation and completing the work to a higher standard. This good practice must now be applied

across all classes. Teachers are checking pupils' work but, in some classes, basic errors such as writing capital letters in the middle of sentences remain unchallenged.

The impact of your senior and middle leaders is mixed. You are currently developing the senior leadership team but it is too early to see the impact of this work on all subjects or aspects of the curriculum. The English and mathematics leaders are very clear about what they have to do. They are positive about the support of the local authority's advisers and make good use of their leadership time to look at pupils' work and teachers' planning. More must be done to ensure that they, and other subject leaders, quickly develop their skills to evaluate progress in their subjects accurately and contribute to improving the quality of teaching.

Governance continues to be strong as identified at the time of the March 2016 inspection. The new chair of the governing body is clear about what needs to be done. The governing body commissioned the local authority to undertake several external reviews, including a review of their work. They are acting diligently on findings from this review. Governors visit the school frequently and ask you and senior leaders challenging questions about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority is providing effective support and challenge. The English and mathematics advisers and the education improvement partner are helping staff to improve their subject knowledge and classroom practice. Teachers have good opportunities to work with highly effective schools. The school's improvement partner knows exactly where further work is required to accelerate the pace of change. An action group, chaired by the local authority, provides an effective forum to check progress against your key priorities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector