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Mrs Diane Wakefield  
Hawthorn Primary School  
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South Yorkshire  
DN4 6LQ

Dear Mrs Wakefield

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hawthorn Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 December 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 February 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 February 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:

- raise the quality and consistency of teaching, to be as effective as in the best practice, by embedding successful strategies already in place
- reverse the declining trend in phonics and further improve outcomes in reading
- consider when it is most appropriate to withdraw less-able pupils from lessons so they do not miss valuable teaching with their class

- increase the impact of strategies to improve attendance.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, four representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and spent time reviewing school documentation relating to performance management, pupil assessment information, attendance information and governance. I observed teaching and learning in all of the year groups, along with one of your senior leaders, and we spoke to pupils and scrutinised their work.

## **Context**

Two teachers left the school in July. Only one teacher was appointed in replacement due to smaller numbers of Reception pupils.

The governing body have reconstituted and have introduced a co-chair model for governance and a national leader of governance has joined the governing body.

## **Main findings**

You are leading the school with drive and determination and there is a shared commitment to improving outcomes for all pupils. Leaders are realistic about the school's current effectiveness. Despite the clear indications of success in some aspects of the school's work, leaders remain tirelessly focused on tackling the next priorities. A wider leadership team with shared responsibilities and clearer accountability is supporting the school's progress. Stronger teaching, stable staffing and high expectations for pupils have been instrumental in securing the rapid improvements needed. Success has been evident, especially in outcomes for the early years and for spelling, punctuation and grammar. Where progress has been slower, for example with attendance, leaders need to refine their plans so they can evaluate which strategies are most successful.

The governing body has the skills and knowledge to provide the support and challenge the school requires. Following a governance review, the governing body has reconstituted to include co-chairs and a national leader of governance. Having implemented all of the actions which emerged from the governance review, governors now have a greater understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and are in a stronger position to drive forward improvements. A more streamlined focus on pupil progress is helping governors check the effectiveness of the school's strategies and to challenge leaders when actions do not achieve the desired results.

Outcomes in the early years have risen dramatically over the last two years. 71% of

children achieved a good level of development in 2016. Ambitious targets have been set for this trend to continue and for even more children to make better than expected progress and exceed the early learning goals. Support provided by the local authority and a new leadership arrangement for the early years have resulted in raised expectations, improvements to the learning environment and better outcomes for children. Leaders now need to track the learning of pupils who have free school meals more carefully so that teachers can support them to make the best possible progress.

Published data indicates that progress overall and for disadvantaged pupils was broadly in line with the national average in all subjects at key stage 2 in 2016. In key stage 1, pupils made expected progress from their starting points in writing and mathematics but progress was slightly weaker in reading. Phonics outcomes are not yet good enough and declined in 2016 in both year 1 and year 2. You have identified both phonics and reading as areas for improvement for the whole school.

The school's tracking and monitoring show that teaching is having an increasingly positive impact on pupils' progress. The work I saw in books and observed in lessons also reflects this, with pupils generally making more rapid gains in their learning. Leaders use their subject knowledge to good effect in order to professionally challenge each other when monitoring the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Regular pupil progress meetings are supporting teachers in using assessment information to identify next steps for groups and individuals.

In most cases, teachers demonstrate a sound curriculum knowledge coupled with high expectations. They use this to prepare resources designed to provide pupils with the appropriate challenge and support to maximise progress. Where learning is not as strong, teachers do not match the work with pupils' starting points and therefore it does not provide them with sufficient challenge, sometimes resulting in disengagement. In the most effective situations, teachers and support staff question pupils well to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. However, on some occasions when less-able groups of pupils are withdrawn from the classroom, the pupils are not able to benefit from the high-quality teaching input which their peers receive in class. This limits their progress. You acknowledge that the challenge now is to embed the new strategies more thoroughly in order to raise the quality and consistency of teaching further.

Leaders have introduced a whole-school approach to meet the needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health issues. This involves targeted support for groups and individuals and has resulted in a reduction in the number of behaviour incidents. Attendance is proving more difficult to increase at a fast enough rate. Leaders need to refine the actions within the school development plan so they are sharp enough for progress to be measured and effectiveness to be evaluated.

The school does not meet the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## **External support**

The school is drawing effectively on the considerable advisory support which the local authority is providing. Support has focused primarily on the early years. This has enabled the leader to build a strong team of committed staff who have developed their teaching and the use of assessment to plan the next steps for children's learning. As a result of improvements in the leadership and teaching of early years, more pupils are ready for the next stage of their learning. Advisory support has also helped leaders to address a number of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders now need to embed the new strategies implemented in order to sustain and further develop the improvements made.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey

**Her Majesty's Inspector**