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24 February 2017

Mrs Lynne Ryder  
Interim Executive Headteacher  
Wargrave CofE Primary School  
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Merseyside  
WA12 8QL

Dear Mrs Ryder

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wargrave CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 2017, 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.

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.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the focus on mathematics does not hinder the progress made by pupils in reading and writing in key stage 2.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the interim executive headteacher, other senior leaders, two members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's action plans were evaluated. You accompanied me

on a learning walk and I took the opportunity to talk to pupils and to look at their work. I met with leaders responsible for mathematics and the pupil premium, and scrutinised a range of documents relating to pupils' progress, the quality of teaching, performance management and governance. You also made available the findings of recent reviews undertaken by the local authority and the review of governance which was recommended following the previous inspection.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has left the school and the local authority has arranged for you, as headteacher of a nearby outstanding school, to be the interim executive headteacher. You provide the strategic leadership and support for the two acting deputy headteachers. A number of new appointments have been made to secure effective leadership of mathematics and to ensure that the use of pupil premium funding has a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. A part-time teacher has also been employed to provide specific support in mathematics.

## **Main findings**

Your arrival in September 2016 has provided the much needed strategic leadership to move this school forward. You have brought stability and a sense of security to the staff, pupils and parents. As a result of your support, leaders and teachers believe that this school can be good and know how this ambition can be realised.

The actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics are having a positive impact and pupils are beginning to make quicker progress. In the lessons we saw, and in the books I scrutinised, it is clear that pupils are learning to think and to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems; they are not afraid to make mistakes and want to know where they went wrong. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and there is an energy and sense of focus in the classrooms. We discussed the weaknesses in pupils' basic mathematical skills that need to be addressed and you showed me a number of actions that have already been implemented. There is still a lot of catch-up required but everyone – teachers, pupils and parents – is working hard to make up lost ground as quickly as possible. Leadership of mathematics is effective and there is a clear road map to quicken the pace of improvements.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Teachers value the feedback they are given as it provides them with specific areas for development. Teachers are particularly enthusiastic about the training and support they receive to improve their practice and say that they have regained a sense of belief in themselves and their capabilities. This support and training are incorporated into the school's system to monitor the effectiveness of teaching which was previously missing.

Teaching has also been strengthened by the use of accurate assessment information

which teachers use to inform their planning. It has particularly helped them to focus on planning to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The fact that teachers are now held to account for the performance of these groups has sharpened the focus even more.

Disadvantaged pupils are supported by additional funding that is appropriately targeted. Until recently, the funding had been spent in a haphazard manner. Leaders know what the barriers are to pupils' learning and have judiciously chosen strategies to overcome them. Your own assessment information shows that the difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers is diminishing but the gaps are still wide. Nonetheless, the plans you have put in place are proving to be effective and the leader of the pupil premium is a committed champion for these pupils.

In summer 2016, the achievement of pupils at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly below the national average. The difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally was wide. Similarly, the standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 were below the national expected figures. These results ended a year of turbulence and unrest for the school. The previous inspection highlighted a number of issues and the local authority identified further concerns following the inspection. Most significant was the inaccuracy of assessment information, especially at the end of key stage 1. Leaders immediately carried out baseline assessments and their understanding of pupils' starting points is now secure.

Last year's results also reminded leaders that, while much attention is rightly paid to mathematics, this cannot be at the expense of reading and writing. Subsequently, leaders worked with teachers to raise the standards in reading and writing following a structured action plan. Leaders have been incisive in their actions and have identified exactly where the weaknesses lay and ensured that appropriate interventions and strategies are put in place.

An external review of governance took place in June 2016 and clearly identified a number of actions that governors needed to undertake in order to improve their effectiveness. The governors I spoke with told me that they valued this review but found it a sobering experience as they realised how little challenge they were providing. Governors acted swiftly and there is a noticeable change in the focus and emphasis of their meetings. It is clear that governors understand the progress of different groups of pupils and they are asking questions in relation to school improvement. The skills audit which was undertaken identified where there was little experience and/or expertise and governors have been successful in filling these gaps. Governors now hold leaders to account and know what is expected of a good school.

## **External support**

Since the inspection in March 2016, the school has received effective support from the local authority. Staff have benefited from the practice shared with a number of good and outstanding schools. The local authority and the diocese know the school well and are optimistic about its future success, given the positive impact of leaders' and governors' actions in a short space of time. The local authority's human resources department has aided the school in dealing with recent and highly complex personnel issues.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**