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17 December 2018

Mrs Liz Garman and Mr Peter Nealon  
Joint Heads of School  
The Grange School  
Redvers Road  
Christchurch  
Dorset  
BH23 3AU

Dear Mrs Garman and Mr Nealon

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The Grange School**

Following my visit to your school on 4 December 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in March 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with both of you, one other senior leader, middle leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body and one other governor. I evaluated a range of documentation, including the school's plans for improvement, and reviews of behaviour and attendance. I met with pupils from the school council. I observed learning in a small number of lessons together with senior leaders. I talked with pupils about their school and looked at examples of their work to gain a view of teaching over time.

### **Context**

The school is part of the Twynham Learning multi-academy trust. The previous headteacher left the school at the end of May 2018. You both took up your posts as joint heads of school at the start of June 2018. Two new governors joined the local governing body in September 2018. One of these is a member of the trust board. Many teachers have recently joined the school, including the entire science department.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

In your roles as joint heads of school, you communicate effectively with each other, with staff and with parents and carers. You present a coherent vision for the future of the school. As a result of your clear leadership, all staff know what is required of them. Staff now expect more of themselves, and of pupils, because you model high aspirations.

Senior leaders have identified specific principles of teaching that they expect all staff to follow. Senior leaders evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment accurately. They use their evaluations well to identify the priorities for improving teaching. As a result, the school's plans for improvement are coherent and focused on the most important aspects of teachers' work.

Several middle leaders are new to the school. Middle leaders have a good understanding of their roles and they are enthusiastic about helping pupils to make better progress in their subjects. However, they have had little time to close the gaps in pupils' knowledge that have come about because of ineffective teaching in the past.

Pupils' progress measured across eight GCSE subjects increased significantly in 2018 and was around the national average. However, disadvantaged pupils' progress was still well below the progress of other pupils nationally. Senior leaders' strategy for improving the progress of this group of pupils is not fully established and so has shown little impact so far.

Year 11 pupils made better progress in GCSE mathematics last year compared with previous years. New leadership of the mathematics department is ensuring that teachers assess pupils' mathematical understanding accurately. Teachers are beginning to use this information well to plan teaching that challenges all abilities of pupils to make good progress.

Pupils' progress in GCSE English subjects improved in 2018, but not by as large a margin as other subjects. Pupils' weak literacy skills still hold them back considerably in this and all other areas of the curriculum. Senior leaders have introduced initiatives to encourage pupils to read more often. For example, pupils now read in tutor time one morning a week. Pupils now use the recently refurbished library more frequently. Nevertheless, you are acutely aware of the need to improve pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The quality of teaching in science has improved since the previous inspection. All the current science teachers are new to the school. Pupils believe that they are making better progress in science than in the past. However, senior leaders accept that they have not yet overcome pupils' underachievement from the past.

You have reviewed the curriculum and thought carefully about the range of subjects

being taught and the time spent on each. You have begun the process of developing a more balanced curriculum. For example, you have introduced religious education and you have increased the amount of time allocated to pupils' personal development. These changes have the potential to improve pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Nevertheless, at this point, this is still an area of weakness across the school.

Many pupils commented that senior leaders' insistence on a high standard of behaviour from all pupils is making a difference to the atmosphere in the school. Pupils understand the type of behaviour that is expected by staff. Teachers are becoming more consistent in their use of the behaviour policy. As a result, more and more pupils across the school are demonstrating the positive 'Grange behaviours'.

You are determined to increase pupils' rates of attendance. Senior leaders have introduced new systems for tracking pupils' attendance and supporting those pupils who find it difficult to attend school regularly. Staff have been trained to apply these systems. Consequently, staff throughout the school understand that improving the rate of pupils' attendance is everyone's responsibility. There are signs that this work is beginning to have an effect. However, pupils' rate of attendance remains too low and too many pupils are persistently absent.

The school receives considerable support from the trust. Several staff from other schools in the trust have either transferred to work at this school full time or provide part-time coaching for school staff. Many teachers share ideas with other schools in the trust. This is leading to better moderation of the assessment of pupils' work and improvements in teachers' planning. Senior leaders have aligned the timings of lessons for key stage 4 optional subjects with Twynham School. Pupils now have a greater choice of subjects because, for the first time, they are able to study some subjects at Twynham School.

Senior leaders are supported by leaders from Magna Academy and St Aldhelm's Academy on a range of aspects of the school's work. For example, they have reviewed and shared ideas about how to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders welcome the advice they receive. This is an example of the openness to ideas from outside that has grown since the previous inspection.

Senior leaders provide parents with timely information about the progress of the school against the agreed actions for improvement. They invite all parents to an information evening every half term. Through these events, senior leaders provide updates on actions in the post-inspection action plan. Senior leaders are open about seeking parents' views about the future of the school. They are planning to set up a parent forum group, representing a cross-section of parents, to develop further a culture of openness.

Governors accept that they did not scrutinise the work of the school closely enough

in the past. Two new governors have recently been appointed to the local governing body. These governors are experienced and skilful. The local governing body asks searching questions and challenges senior leaders. The trust board now has a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It is able to carry out its responsibilities more effectively.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**