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20 January 2014

Diane Ward  
Headteacher  
Tunstall Nursery School  
Tunstall Road  
Croydon  
CR0 6TY

Dear Ms Ward

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tunstall Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 14 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- increase the accuracy and urgency with which leaders are tackling the areas for improvement
- ensure that their analysis of information about how well children are doing leads to carefully planned improvement actions.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and the deputy headteachers, other staff who have specific responsibilities, three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school

improvement plan. Minutes of governing body meetings, achievement information, children's learning profiles and your records of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning were scrutinised. I joined you to visit the indoor and outdoor learning areas, where we observed the children using the activities that were planned for them.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, the local authority has appointed an external consultant to work with the school as a linked adviser. A new parent governor has been appointed to the governing body.

## **Main findings**

You and other leaders are passionate about the school. You know your local community, the parents and their children well. Initially, you and your staff were shocked by the outcome of the recent inspection. However, you have successfully galvanised them into moving forwards positively. You have created an action plan that identifies the issues that you need to address, but it is not specific enough about the actions that you will take, when they will be taken by and where the responsibility for monitoring lies.

You have established a year-long plan for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, the frequency of your monitoring has increased. Staff now receive individual feedback about their work which not only tells them what they do well, but also what they could do better. Your records however show that you do not pay enough attention to how well children learn because of the teaching. You have ensured that all staff have performance objectives which are linked to children's progress, but they are not detailed enough to enable you to challenge poor or weak performance.

You have changed the time in the term at which staff collect evidence about children's abilities when they first start school. However, you are not using this information as strategically as you could in order to make changes to provision that would support your most vulnerable children. Teaching staff lack the skills in how to use the information that they collect about how well children achieve in order to strategically plan improvements in the quality of the provision. Leaders have worked in isolation and placed too much reliance upon the expertise of those who work at the school. Your links with outstanding providers beyond your own locality are too few to enable you to learn and benefit from the very best practice. Consequently, you have focused too much on addressing the short-term issues that the school faces at the expense of planning strategically for the long-term improvements that are needed.

You have taken some steps to improve how teaching meets the learning needs of your children. The introduction of a separate daily story session for more able children enables them to share their reading skills and learn more quickly. Review meetings involving all staff, following each half-day session, ensure that key-workers are aware of the learning and development of children for which they have responsibility.

Governors acknowledge that they have been far too accepting of the information that they have been given by the school and that their relationship with leaders has been cosy. They want to do their very best for the school and aspire to the very highest quality of provision. They understand which aspects of leadership need to improve but need external support, advice and challenge in order to bring this about. They moved quickly to commission a review of their work from the local authority but are frustrated that as yet, they have not received a written report or action plan. Governors and teachers are aware of their training needs but have not had the opportunity to discuss these with local authority officers. Governors want and need training in how to challenge school leaders and hold them to account for improvements in teaching and learning.

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 school's governors believe that the local authority does not know this school well enough and that it has not supported or challenged the school to improve. From the evidence presented to me during my visit, I agree. The local authority has only recently appointed a school link adviser. He has been allocated too little time to support and challenge the school given its weaknesses. This allocation does not appear to be based upon an assessment of the needs of the school. Governors have not yet received the written report from the local authority led review of governance, which took place in early December. This has limited their ability to move forward as quickly as they need to.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Croydon.

Yours sincerely

Adam Higgins  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**