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26 March 2014

Miss Vivienne Bunce  
Stow Heath Primary School  
Hill Road  
Portobello  
Willenhall  
WV13 3TT

Dear Miss Bunce

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Stow Heath Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 4 December 2013.

#### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteachers and the assistant headteacher, three members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the school's allocated national leader of education (NLE). I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan.

#### **Context**

Since the inspection in December, three teachers have resigned. Two teachers have been appointed and will take up their posts after Easter. The leadership team has been expanded through the appointment of an assistant headteacher and a deputy headteacher in January. An additional parent governor has been elected.

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

There is tangible determination and commitment from you, senior leaders and governors to improve the school as quickly as possible. The capacity to make improvements has increased since the inspection with the appointment of a second deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher. You have quickly formed effective working relationships with this new senior leadership team and you have allocated them clear roles. They understand that you will hold them accountable for improvements in their areas of responsibility.

The improvement plan is focused on the key areas for improvement identified at the inspection and includes a range of appropriate actions. It dovetails well with the local authority's statement of action. The statement of action and the school plan include challenging targets for pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 for the next four years. However, the targets set for 2014 do not sufficiently account for the degree of previous underachievement and are not realistic. The school plan does not include precise enough timescales for checking on the impact of each action and governors are not involved enough in these monitoring activities. You recognise the need to improve these areas of the plan and have agreed to do so.

Your initial actions have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching. Senior leaders have begun to provide coaching for teachers to enable them to improve their practice, and each teacher has an individual plan to support their improvement. Teachers are benefiting from support with their lesson planning and from observing good practice. You are monitoring the quality of teaching more regularly. Systems are developing to ensure that leaders go back after coaching and training activities to check that improvements are being made quickly enough. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of this.

Teachers are also beginning to benefit from working with the national leader of education and her staff. A comprehensive programme of support is in place for all leaders, teachers and teaching assistants to learn from observing good practice and participating in training during the next two terms. Crucially, plans are in place for you to work with the partner school to ensure that the information you have about pupils' progress is accurate.

Teachers now have more challenging expectations set in their appraisal targets. The targets focus on ensuring that pupils make faster progress than was previously expected. This is to ensure that pupils make up lost ground and achieve at least in line with their peers nationally. The governors have robust procedures in place if the quality of teaching does not improve.

You acted decisively to ensure that the reviews of governance and pupil premium funding were completed quickly. As part of the review, thorough and detailed action plans have been prepared to ensure that governors can address the areas of weakness quickly and effectively. Governors have plans in place to make the necessary improvements, for instance by changing their committee structure and appointing a governor with responsibility for the pupil premium funding.

Through regular meetings and reviews the local authority are providing an appropriate level of challenge to the school. In brokering support from the national leader of education at a local primary school, they have ensured that an appropriate level of support is in place.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**