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Ian Barton
Executive Headteacher
Stambridge Primary School
Stambridge Road
Rochford
SS4 2AP

Dear Mr Barton

Special measures monitoring inspection of Stambridge Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 May 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 12–13 February 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the acting headteacher, a representative of the local authority and four members of staff. Short visits were made to all classes, during which pupils' work was looked at and discussed with them. The local authority's statement of action and the school's single action plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has been absent through ill health. You have been appointed to the role of executive headteacher and two part-time teachers and two teaching assistants have been appointed. An acting headteacher was seconded to the school at the start of this term on a part-time basis until 2

June, when the role will become full-time, initially for the summer term. An interim executive board to replace the governing body has been approved by the Department for Education and there are arrangements for the school to become a sponsored academy.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Following the inspection, you restructured classes and increased the teaching staff to ensure that the needs of pupils could be more effectively met. You have strengthened management procedures to ensure processes that need to be in place to drive improvement are established. The deputy headteacher has improved provision by ensuring that the statutory requirements for pupils with a statement of special educational need are met.

The deputy headteacher has also supported the school to bring about improvements to the accuracy of assessment. Although there is still further work to be done, a clear baseline of pupils' attainment and progress has been established. This means that leaders can analyse the extent to which teaching is more accurately matched to pupils' different capabilities and specific learning needs. Assessment information shows that pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach levels of attainment in line with national expectations. This is an improvement on the standards reached in 2013.

Pupils and staff spoken to are clear that procedures for managing incidents of unacceptable behaviour have been improved and that these are addressed by you and the deputy headteacher, with parents being involved where necessary.

Much of this inspection was undertaken with the new acting headteacher. In a very short time, he has produced a single action plan which identifies appropriate priorities, actions and timescales that are needed to achieve success. This includes key elements to be achieved this term. These suitably reflect the urgency of the need for significant and rapid improvement. A monitoring calendar makes sure that all staff know what is expected of them, both in terms of what aspects of their practice will be evaluated and, for those with leadership responsibilities, how and when they will be engaged in monitoring the school's work. Staff spoken to unequivocally agree that they feel better supported to bring about the improvements necessary. There is still, however, some uncertainty about the future leadership and staffing arrangements.

The interim executive board will meet for the first time on 15 May. Members have significant experience of school improvement and include you, so that you will be well placed to monitor improvements led by the acting headteacher. A member of

the board attended feedback discussion with the inspector to establish an understanding of the school's position.

Following the decline in the 2013 results, the local authority provided enhanced support to the school, issued a warning notice and suspended the delegated budget in October 2013. At the same time, they brokered the support of a local primary academy to improve leadership and teaching.

Since the inspection, the local authority has applied for and established the interim executive board, secured your further leadership and brokered the work of the acting headteacher. A standards and excellence commissioner visits regularly and has helped to shape the current leadership arrangements. The statement of action identifies an appropriate range of actions, resources and personnel to support improvement; however, these have not yet been tightly aligned with the new planning being implemented by the acting headteacher.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector