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20 May 2014

Jamie Pardon  
Acting Headteacher  
Whitefield Primary School  
Stockholm Way  
Luton  
LU3 3SS

Dear Mrs Pardon

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Whitefield Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 19 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 December 2013. 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. The school should take further action to:

- make all teaching good or better so that pupil's attainment continues to rise and their progress accelerates, particularly in mathematics.
- ensure systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are robust and as accurate as possible by making use of internal and external support.
- ensure that teachers understand the difference between compliant behaviour and real pupil engagement in their learning which inspires them to achieve better.
- evaluate the impact of Pupil Premium funding on eligible pupils' outcomes to make sure it is used to best effect.

**Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, including with the consultant leader, the vice-chair and three additional members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils from Key Stage 2 to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan and scrutinised minutes of meetings of the governing body. We also visited most classes briefly, to talk to pupils and look at their books. I also scrutinised the school's records of recruitment checks on staff.

**Context**

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher resigned from her post and left the school in April 2014, and you became the acting headteacher. An assistant headteacher is now acting as your deputy. An additional assistant headteacher left the school at Easter and another member of staff is carrying out their duties. You are supported 3 days a week by a consultant leader, who is a National Leader of Education, from a local primary academy.

**Main findings**

The leadership of the school has undergone some turbulence since the inspection in December 2013. Following two unsuccessful attempts to recruit a new headteacher, the governing body asked you to lead the school in the interim period. You rightly recognised the challenges of this role, and requested additional support to add extra capacity to the leadership team. At the time of the last inspection, most senior leaders had a heavy teaching commitment and consequently had little time to be strategic. You are now in a stronger position to move the school forward, both through the provision of a consultant leader and the freeing up of senior leaders from teaching a full timetable.

Leaders, managers and governors recognised that the first school improvement plan produced after the last inspection was not wholly fit for purpose, as it did not address the reasons for pupils' underachievement sufficiently. You have rewritten the plan so that it now focuses on improving the quality of teaching in particular, with the aim of securing improved outcomes for pupils. Despite the plan only being written in April, many of the actions have already happened and a few are starting to make a difference. Nevertheless, it remains too early to assess the impact of the plan fully. For example, it is clear that pupils are starting to see improvements in teachers' marking and are being given dedicated time to respond to some of their teachers' comments.

You are communicating your higher expectations as senior leaders by visiting classes on a regular basis to check on pupils' progress. You acknowledge that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils' expectations of themselves must be raised. You have moved your Early Years Foundation Stage leader up to Year 1 to

share the good practice already identified in this area of the school. Currently, too much teaching requires improvement and, while pupils might be compliant for teachers, they are not always fully engaged in the learning process. Pupils told me that their progress is sometimes slowed down by a minority of pupils who lose interest in what they are learning, and sometimes misbehave. Some pupils also told me that they find the tasks given to them too easy.

Teachers' assessments have not always been accurate in the past. Your systems for tracking pupils' progress and setting more challenging targets are becoming more refined, but are not yet embedded. Your current forecasts indicate that, although outcomes may improve slightly compared to 2013, they will remain below the national average. Progress in mathematics remains a key area to be tackled because of weak teaching. Gaps in attainment for those pupils who receive Pupil Premium funding and others in the school are not closing quickly enough.

Governors are clearly committed to improving pupils' outcomes and have demonstrated that they will only appoint a new headteacher of high calibre. They provide more challenge than in the past, and visit the school termly with a specific focus in mind. They are aware of the existing barriers to school improvement, and know what needs to be done to tackle these effectively. However, they appreciate that the turbulence in leadership since the last inspection means that progress is not as rapid as it needs to be. They are confident that the current leadership arrangements are in the best interests of the pupils.

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 local authority has supported the school more intensively by brokering additional support to add to leadership capacity. This has been demonstrated by the provision of a consultant leader, and the increased use of specialist consultants to improve standards in English and mathematics. These consultants have worked well with subject leaders to produce separate action plans. The local authority has also supported governors in succession planning, establishing interim leadership arrangements and in attempting to recruit a new headteacher. The local authority monitors the school's progress towards achieving the goals outlined in the action plan through its monitoring meetings which are attended by all key stakeholders.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell

**PROTECT-INSPECTION**



**Her Majesty's Inspector**