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8 July 2014

Miss P Tankard  
Headteacher  
Yew Tree Community Primary School and Acorn Nursery  
Yew Tree Lane  
Dukinfield  
Cheshire  
SK16 5BJ

Dear Miss Tankard

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Yew Tree Community Primary School and Acorn Nursery**

Following my visit to your school on 7 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 March 2014. 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:

- ensure that the school's post Ofsted action plan makes clear the intended impact of each action on the achievement of specific groups of pupils, particularly of those who have a disability or special educational needs, those supported by the pupil premium funding and the most able
- work with the local authority to support the improved ways of teaching and learning that the school has put in place in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and ensure that they are securely embedded.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders and the Chair of the Interim Strategic Group of the Governing Body (ISG), as well as

with a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action you have taken since the last inspection. A range of documents was considered during the visit, including the 'post Ofsted action plan,' which was evaluated and records of the outcomes of monitoring activities and of the impact of performance management. A sample of pupils' written work across the school was also scrutinised. I made brief visits to all classes, during which I looked at the quality of teaching and learning and listened to pupils' views about their learning. I also considered 45 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

## **Context**

In recent years, the school has been through considerable instability in terms of staffing and governance, which is currently secured through a small Interim Strategic Group (ISG.) A re-structuring of some senior and middle leadership roles has taken place. No new staff have joined the school since the time of the last inspection.

## **Main findings**

You and senior leaders share a very clear vision of what the school needs to do in order to become good. You and other leaders in the school are enthusiastic and fully committed to the school's improvement. In the short time since the last inspection you have made considerable headway in tackling the areas for improvement recommended by the inspectors. For example, you have raised some aspects of pupils' achievement, notably in writing across the school and improved the quality of teaching significantly. Attendance is just below average but this represents an improvement on last year's rates.

Senior and other staff have been well supported by professional development, for example to improve their leadership skills and the quality of teaching. However you are aware that there is more to be done in order for the school to become consistently good in all aspects of its work. For example the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) leader has ensured improvements to the recording of children's learning and the planning, by teachers and their assistants, of more purposeful activities for the children. Further support will be required for the embedding of these new ways of teaching and learning.

You and the senior leaders have adopted a very determined and systematic approach to improving the school. This is much appreciated by staff who are in charge of subjects or other aspects of the schools work. When asked about the strengths of the school they said: 'the headteacher!' Some of these middle leaders are new to their roles, but are effectively supported and challenged to carry out their responsibilities. You have put in place, for example, very robust procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. It is evident from records of your own and external moderation that almost all teaching is now good, with some that is outstanding. The new marking policy makes sure that teachers generally give regular and helpful feedback to pupils on how they can improve their

work. Nevertheless you are aware through your own systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning of some inconsistencies across year groups and subjects.

Systems of target setting for performance management hold the teaching staff to account effectively by means of rigorous targets. You are unafraid to make sharp decisions about staffing and the two-stage system of progressively intensive support and challenge to teachers works very effectively to improve their practice or move them on. You are currently well supported by a relatively new Interim Strategic Group whose members are very well informed about education and the school's strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless you have rightly set in place the reconstruction of the full governing body to strengthen the capacity of governors to challenge to the school to improve.

The school has made a good start to improving pupils' achievement and many measures of attainment and progress are set to improve this year. This better progress is partly due to the improved use of assessment information by teachers and their assistants. Most pupils supported by the pupil premium progress well, sometimes better than other pupils in the school, because of your wise decisions about how to spend the funding. Those pupils who have a disability or special educational needs, who have previously lagged behind, have also begun to make up ground. However there is more work to be done to ensure that all such pupils and the most able achieve as well as they can.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school, during the inspection, was very positive. Pupils concentrate hard and work together well. They take pride in their work and are confident in speaking with adults.

The 'post Ofsted action plan' is fit for purpose, being thorough and detailed, with appropriate timescales and generally clear measures of success. The plan therefore sets a clear agenda for the school's improvement. Nevertheless some minor adjustments would ensure clarity as to how the various actions are to be carried out, to improve the outcomes of different pupil groups.

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 provided effective support for the leadership and management of the school. They have assisted the school in refining systems for performance management and for coaching senior and middle leaders in the observation of teaching and in action planning. You also draw well on support from an independent consultant for the quality assurance of the school's work and on local teaching schools for professional development related to the improvement of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Tameside and as below.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority