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15 September 2014

Mrs Catherine French  
Headteacher  
Ruskin Junior School  
Ruskin Avenue  
Wellingborough  
NN8 3EG

Dear Mrs French

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ruskin Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, the academy advisory board and the sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with yourself, the deputy headteacher, the co-ordinator for special educational needs and/or disabilities, a teaching assistant and the subject leader for mathematics. I also spoke with the Chair of the Academy Advisory Board and the Director of Information Technology and School Development from the Education Fellowship. These meetings were held in order to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I visited a number of classrooms, spoke with pupils informally and looked at their work. I examined a range of documentation, including the academy's post-ofsted action plan, analysis of your recent data, a sample of pupils' work and minutes of governing body meetings.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, two new leaders have been appointed, one with responsibility for mathematics and one with responsibility for the curriculum. A new co-ordinator

for special educational needs and/or disabilities has been appointed from existing staff. Two teachers have been recruited on temporary contracts to teach in Year 4 and part-time in Year 5. An extensive building project, including six classrooms and a library, is scheduled to commence shortly. This will cater for an increasing number of students on roll.

## **Main findings**

You are becoming increasingly ambitious for all pupils in the school to make good or better progress. Your new extended leadership team is already freeing up capacity for yourself and your deputy to concentrate on the key areas for improvement. Your post-Ofsted action plan relates to the areas for improvement identified by the recent section 5 inspection. There are insufficient measurable success criteria with associated milestones. Monitoring and evaluation activities are included, but there is a lack of clarity regarding who is responsible for evaluation or how the Academy Advisory Board members are involved.

The 2014 results for Year 6 were an improvement upon last year, although underperformance remains in mathematics and for some groups of pupils, particularly girls. Pupil progress meetings are now more sharply focused on the progress of different groups.

Leaders have made a number of effective changes to teaching mathematics. Appropriate mathematical resources are readily available and the use of mathematical vocabulary is encouraged. The majority of teachers have embraced these changes. Leaders have provided pupils with more opportunities for writing, including the use of drama techniques, theme weeks and off-site visits. Weaker readers are encouraged to develop their vocabulary by listening to audio books. Pupils' use of vocabulary is starting to improve as a result.

Leaders have introduced a challenging skills framework for teaching assistants. Teachers routinely share their lesson plans with them. Teaching assistants have a greater understanding of their role. The marking policy has been revised, appropriate training provided, and the policy is beginning to be applied more consistently. However, it is not fully effective in accelerating pupils' progress because teachers do not always ensure that pupils follow the advice given.

The Chair of the Academy Advisory Board is highly committed. She is clear about the responsibilities of the board and those of the sponsor, resulting in an effective working partnership. Members of the Advisory Board provide appropriate challenge and support to the headteacher.

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**

School leaders value the support and challenge provided by the sponsor, particularly for leadership development. New leaders are partnered with Education Fellowship staff from other schools and this is building their confidence. The sponsor has provided two specialists to manage the new building programme so that it does not distract leaders from school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Academy Advisory Board, the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire, the Chief Executive for the Education Fellowship and the Department for Education Academies Advisers' Unit.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wright  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**