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2 October 2014

Mark Ridlinton  
Grove Primary School  
Pickersleigh Grove  
Malvern  
WR14 2LU

Dear Mr Ridlinton

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

Following my visit to your school on 1 October 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 month and year. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school in conjunction with the local authority should take further action to:

- ensure that improvements in governance are maintained following the election of a new Chair, by arranging induction and training
- revise the targets set for pupils' progress so that they are ambitious but realistic, based on assessments of how far they have come already and what they are capable of achieving
- make sure that all teachers have the highest expectations of the pupils and that the pupils needs and capabilities are not viewed as a potential barrier to improvement.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings and discussions with you, other senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the governing body and the local authority's school improvement adviser to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The

school's plans for raising attainment were evaluated. I also toured the school and visited classrooms.

## **Context**

There have been no significant changes to staffing since the school was inspected. Two teachers, including one who is newly qualified, joined the school in September.

## **Main findings**

You, your staff and members of the governing body were disappointed in the outcome of the inspection in July. However, the judgement has served to renew a determination that the school's performance must be judged good as soon as possible. You said that being judged to require improvement for a third time is not an option.

Your plans for raising attainment focus on the areas for improvement that were identified in the recent inspection. There are highly ambitious targets for the amount of progress that pupils are expected to make across the school. However, the rationale behind the setting of these targets is not clear. The targets have not been set in the context of how much progress pupils have made so far and how much they need to make in order to demonstrate that their progress is good and that they therefore narrow the gap on national figures.

Subject leaders are to play a strong part in driving improvements and have a prominent role in monitoring the impact of initiatives on classroom practice. You have drawn up a schedule for monitoring activities, focussing on aspects highlighted in the recent inspection. Subject leaders have begun to implement the schedule, including scrutiny of teachers' plans and regular visits to classrooms as part of learning walks, and have made sure that the purpose of monitoring activities is clear. Monitoring activities are frequent, but necessarily so.

You are investing in a new scheme to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of phonics and spelling. This is likely to have an impact in the lower years of the school and needs to be supplemented by steps to improve spelling in the older year groups. You are also investing in programmes to boost pupils' confidence and raise their self-esteem, in order to accelerate their learning.

The language in one of the action plans gives the impression that some of the potential barriers to progress are the pupils themselves. We discussed this and you know that this is not what is intended. You know that the main reason pupils did not make good progress in the past was weak teaching, not the fact that they had particular circumstances or needs.

We discussed the importance of maintaining the momentum of improvement, so that the school's effectiveness becomes good as quickly as possible.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I intend to visit later this term to meet with members of the governing body and discuss the school's Raise online report when it is available. I would be grateful if you could send me regular updates, for example, copies of your reports to the governing body.

### **External support**

You and your staff are open to change and seek support and advice from colleagues in the local area and from the local authority.

The local authority convenes a project group meeting once a month to review progress against the areas identified as needing improvement. This means that there is a good understanding of the areas that remain to be worked on. The local authority has also offered helpful advice, for example, on drawing up action plans.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority